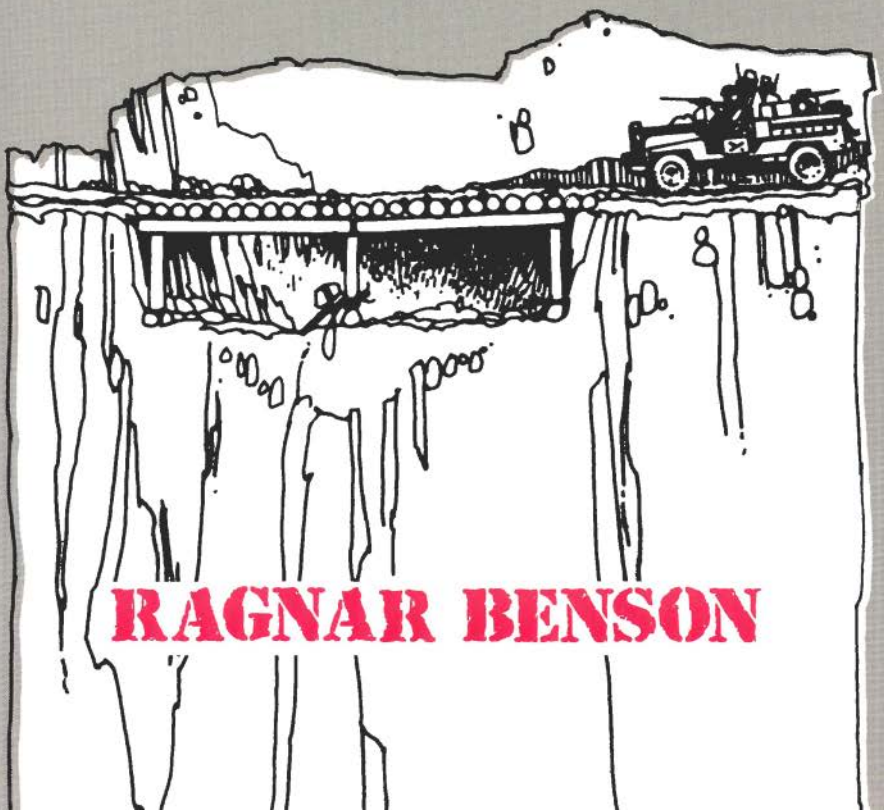
THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

ADVANCED MANTRAPPING TECHNIQUES



RAGNAR BENSON

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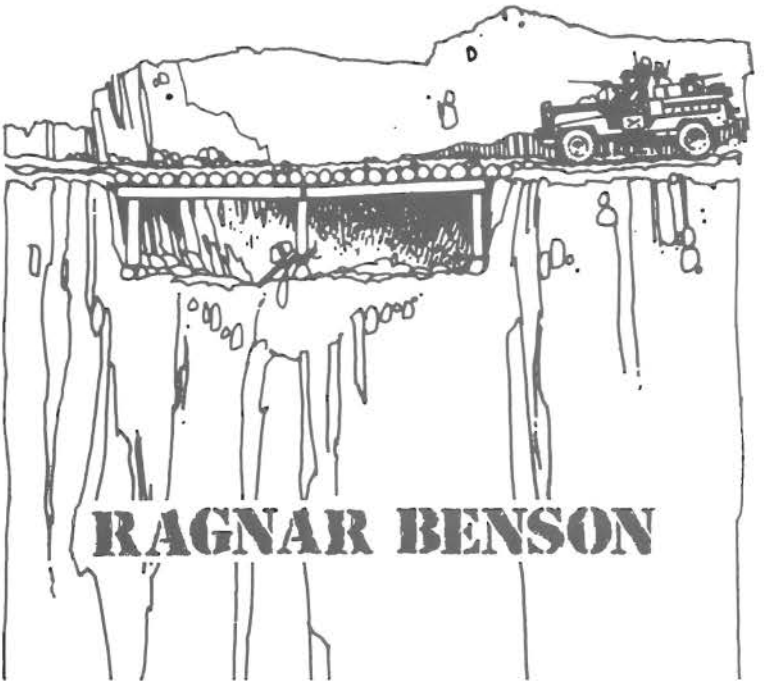

PALADIN PRESS
BOULDER, COLORADO

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The Most Deadly Game
Advanced Mantrapping Techniques
by Ragnar Benson

ISBN 0-87364-356-9
Printed in the United States of America

Published by Paladin Press, a division of
Paladin Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 1307,
Boulder, Colorado 80306, USA.
(303) 443-7250

Direct inquiries and/or orders to the above address.

Illustrations by Bill Border

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INTRODUCTION

Several compelling reasons exist for writing a second book on the subject of mantrapping.

Judging by the number of letters I have received from readers, people are out there putting the information I presented in *Mantrapping* to good use. There is no doubt that survival-oriented paramilitarists are making day-to-day use of the principles and tactics of mantrapping. Good sales of my previous book on the subject in certain countries in the world (Canada and Australia are two examples) are especially surprising since these nations prohibit the sale or advertising of this type of book. It should come as a shock that most supposedly macho paramilitary magazines and papers in the United States won't carry an ad for *Mantrapping,* and none of the "blood-and-guts" books are advertised even in the supposedly macho blood-and-guts magazines.

Another reason for writing a second volume on mantrapping is that in the intervening years since my first book on the subject, I have again taken quite a few international assignments, mostly in rural, difficult-to-reach places. In many cases, a war was going on in the place I was working. In that context I saw, or in a few cases even used, some new kinds of mantraps that I knew would be of interest to paramilitarists.

Guns are increasingly difficult for the adventurer to carry from country to country. As a matter of fact, in

most places in the world, it's impossible to take along or otherwise acquire any kind of firearm. Therefore, the only protection a person has who lives out of the economy is to rig some traps. This in a nutshell is why I seem to run into so many different mantraps. I don't like it but, in many cases, it's the only damn protection we have.

Lastly, people have written to ask why I didn't include this mantrap or that mantrap in my first book. They very validly pointed out that the traps they suggested were fairly common. Sometimes the suggestions were good, and I should have included some of these traps in my first book. In other cases, the concepts were more akin to booby traps; the Hungarian Joker is one of these that I have, in fact, included in this book. It is also important, in my opinion, to cover in this volume more urban traps and traps that will get helicopters or other motorized vehicles.

And there were criticisms. A writer from Connecticut, among others, pointed out that I didn't say enough about being sure the set looked natural after the trap was in. Include a checklist, he said, which I am doing in this volume.

Another writer from Arizona believes I didn't stress camouflage enough. "You didn't tell us how careful one had to be to hide the trap," he wrote. Perhaps not. In this volume, I am going to remind everyone over and over again that the trapper has to hide the damn trap or it won't work.

A few people have written to remind me that I don't know the laws of physics. They are right, of course. My formal training in physics came in high school so many years ago that I can't remember what the teacher or the classroom looked like, much less any "laws" I might have learned. I have, however, actually played around with this stuff a bit. I am sorry the anchor stakes pulled in some cases, or the lines weren't heavy enough and the trap collapsed. One must develop a "feel" for what will work and which parts of the trap will have to withstand

the greatest strain. We'll need to cover that a bit more in detail in this volume.

As with all of my books, I believe the information will be helpful and interesting to those of us around the world who have chosen to lead interesting lives.

PART I:
MANTRAPS

1. JAMAICAN SHARK NET

Apparently this trap, or maybe it should be called a deterrence, is fairly common in the Caribbean. Quite a few people I have talked to know about it. How often such traps are actually used is, however, another question.

I first heard about the Jamaican shark net from one of my sons. At the time he was a member of a team that specialized in rescuing downed aircraft. His group was called in to bring out a Navy Sikorsky HH-3F helicopter that made an emergency down on Mona Island west of the main island of Puerto Rico. The engines on the chopper were both gunny-bagged, according to my son. His team took in tents, tools, and equipment plus two new engines, setting up shop right on the little dirt emergency strip on Mona itself.

The lack of anything except intermittent rainwater keeps the population on Mona down close to the zero mark. It's a nice enough place but without fresh water and regular service to the main island, Mona is too small and jungly to attract many permanent residents.

Mona Island sits right smack in the middle of Mona Passage, one of the principal routes used by the drug runners out of Colombia, and points south. It's faster to come through the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba. For several years, though—until the Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard

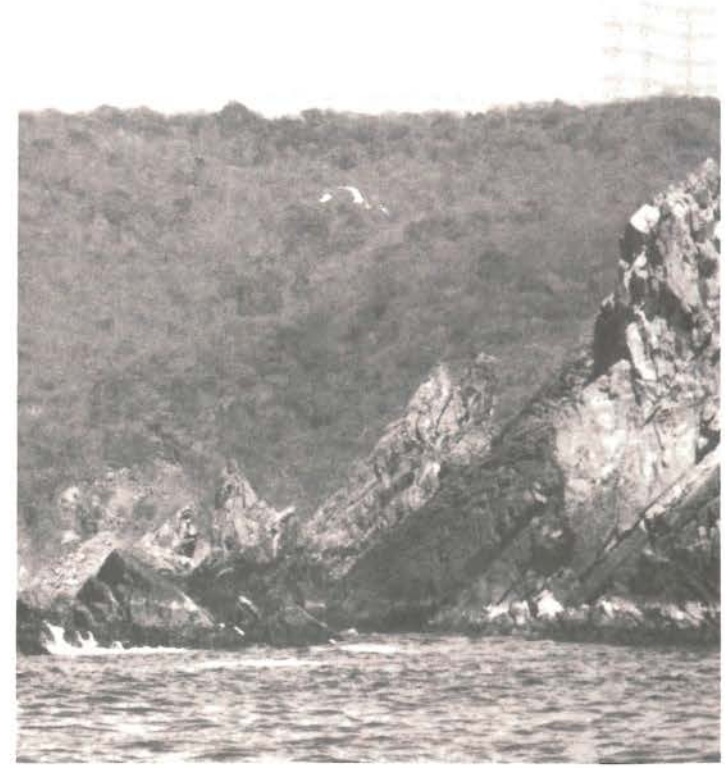
got their act together and tightened up operations—it was much safer to come through the Mona Passage.

At the time the chopper went down, the Coast Guard had just started to step up its level of patrolling in the area. They used the old Strategic Air Command strip near Aguadilla, which is about twenty-five nautical miles from Mona Island, as their base of operation.

As soon as I could work it out, I flew my Rockwell Commander in to see how the team was doing. I landed on the little gravel strip without incident. As I remember, it was about 3,000 feet long with a slight uphill bend on the north end. The rescue team had been on site for about twenty days when I got there. It appeared to me that about 98 percent of the work was completed, which my son later confirmed. It would only take a few more hours, he said, to get the chopper ready for flight back to Aguadilla. But the team wasn't in much of a hurry. Spear fishing along the reefs was excellent, he said, and goat hunting on Mona itself was at least that good.

That afternoon, one of the young men shot a kid with his .22 pistol, and we roasted it over an open fire for dinner. I had to agree the living was real easy. Along with rum and coconut milk and some small groupers we wrapped in banana leaves, the meal is one I will remember for quite a while.

The next morning, we walked down to the shore. Perhaps 1,000 meters up the line my son pointed out the place where team members had run into the wire. It was set in a protected area between a rock wall that formed part of the island itself and some rocky shoals about fifteen meters out in the ocean. Depth at that point was about four meters. The bottom was irregular with lots of cuts and small canyons. Their first encounter with the wire occurred as they worked their way up among the rocks while looking for lobsters. All three team members swam under it without realizing anything was amiss. Since they were all using SCUBA rigs, they were probably in no real danger.



For a shark wire to work best, it must be set in a sheltered cove, parallel to the ocean floor at a depth of at least two meters.

One of the divers ran into the wire as he swam in close to the rock wall. At first he thought some trash had caught in the slackwater pool which had formed in the lee of the rocks. Later, when the team members examined the trap, they found that the thin steel mesh wire was anchored on either side to some old 3/4-inch rotten wire rope. It appeared as though the wire may have been changed a time or two, but they were not certain that was the case. The wire, which was six feet below the water surface, extended out about five meters to the barrier rocks and covered quite a large area. It

was ideally located in a sheltered spot where the tides and current did not immediately tear it out.

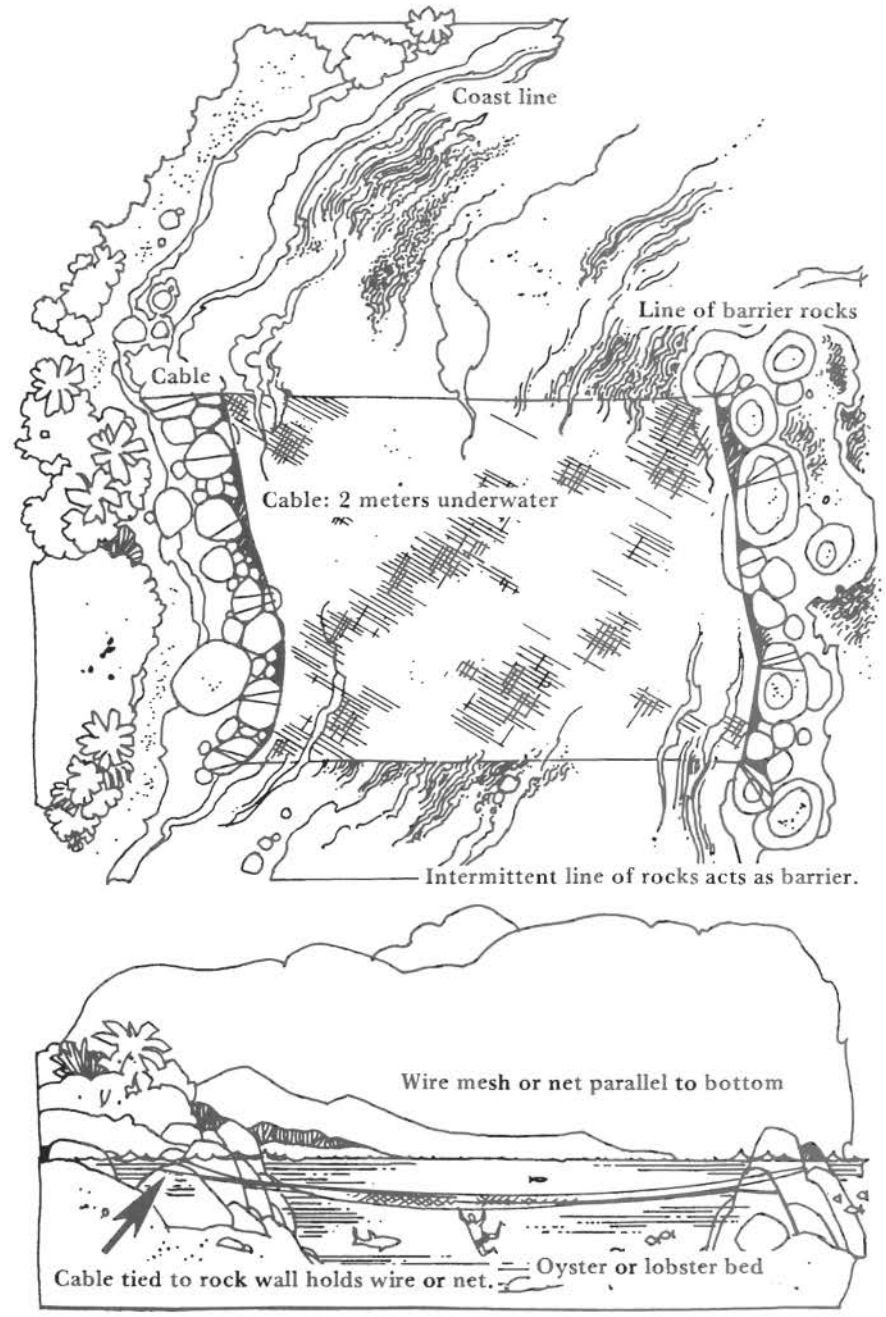
Fishermen in Mayaguez later told me the device was known in Spanish as an *alamere para tiburon,* literally a Jamaican fish or shark wire. Such wires are set out to protect an especially good lobster or reef fishing hole from skin divers. SCUBA divers are not particularly troubled by the wire since they can simply swim under the wire and out the other side, but the wire acts as a deterrent to skin divers.

The device is usually made of large-mesh chicken wire. On the Grand Caicos Island, I was told that sometimes a nylon fish net was used rather than chicken wire because it lasted longer in salt water. Nets there, they said, were set out to keep skin divers from approaching remote airfields under water, as well as to protect fishing areas.

I asked about the effectiveness of net versus wire. They told me that wire was better because most skin divers carried knives and could cut through the net. Wires, they said, cut the victim if he tried to get through. This cutting business is, in my opinion, mostly fictional, yet I can visualize situations in which it might be possible to trap skin divers trying to compromise an area in a paramilitary context.

It appears that the best plan is to use heavier gauge plastic-coated wire that is stretched parallel to the ocean floor. This means that the wire will slope down under the water and may start as low as two or three meters deep! A diver can unknowingly swim under the wire and not be able to reach the surface for air without experiencing a lot of trauma.

By placing the wire net, all but the very determined are discouraged from entering the area. The wire my son encountered covered a fantastic lobster bed from which the team speared a critter that weighed over eleven kilos! Its shell—they are actually crayfish and not traditional lobsters with claws—was big enough to wear over a man's head like a hat!



Ideally, a wire net trap can be placed in the water so that it is sheltered from the tide and currents.

There are problems, though, with net traps. They are obviously expensive to put out. Not only is there the initial expense for wire, but the wire must certainly be replaced with maddening frequency. If the waves and tide don't knock the nets out, the salt water will eat the wire away in very short order. Seaweed washed by the current through the trap will hang on the wire, creating another difficult problem for the trapper. Like all mantraps, the Jamaican Shark Net has its share of problems. That's why it's usually easier to set out booby traps. Yet who knows? Someday you may be sitting in a place where one of these devices will work perfectly.

2. ROCK TRAPS

One of the traps that generated a lot of interest in my previous mantrapping book was the Sheepeater Rock Fall. It is hard to tell if the interest was directed toward the trap or rather to the Indians themselves!

You may recall that the Sheepeaters were a band of Indians who lived high in the northern Rockies in places that other Indians considered inhospitable. They may have possibly been a group of outcasts from other tribes, but no one knows for sure because the tribe became extinct by the 1880s. The guess, however, is that they were a widely scattered tribe which possessed limited technology and lived a very precarious existence in places that were so desolate no other Indians ventured there. It seems that the Sheepeaters as a group were unable to compete with other tribes. So as to limit competition that they knew would always put them in second place, they moved into the high mountains.

That's about all I or anybody else I can find to talk to seems to know about the Sheepeaters.

Several people have asked what the Sheepeaters used for lines to trip their traps. Modern mantrappers are certainly best served by using wire which was, of course, not available to these Indians (who apparently also didn't have guns or metal knives). I don't know for sure what kinds of line they had, but several types were available at that time. The Indians could have made line

out of skins, braided horse and animal hair, intestine, fibery sisal-like material much like cornstalks, several types of maple branches, and even vines. (Some long vines grow in the mountainous West but, like wild grapevines in the Midwest, they tend to be stiff and clumsy when used as trigger lines.)

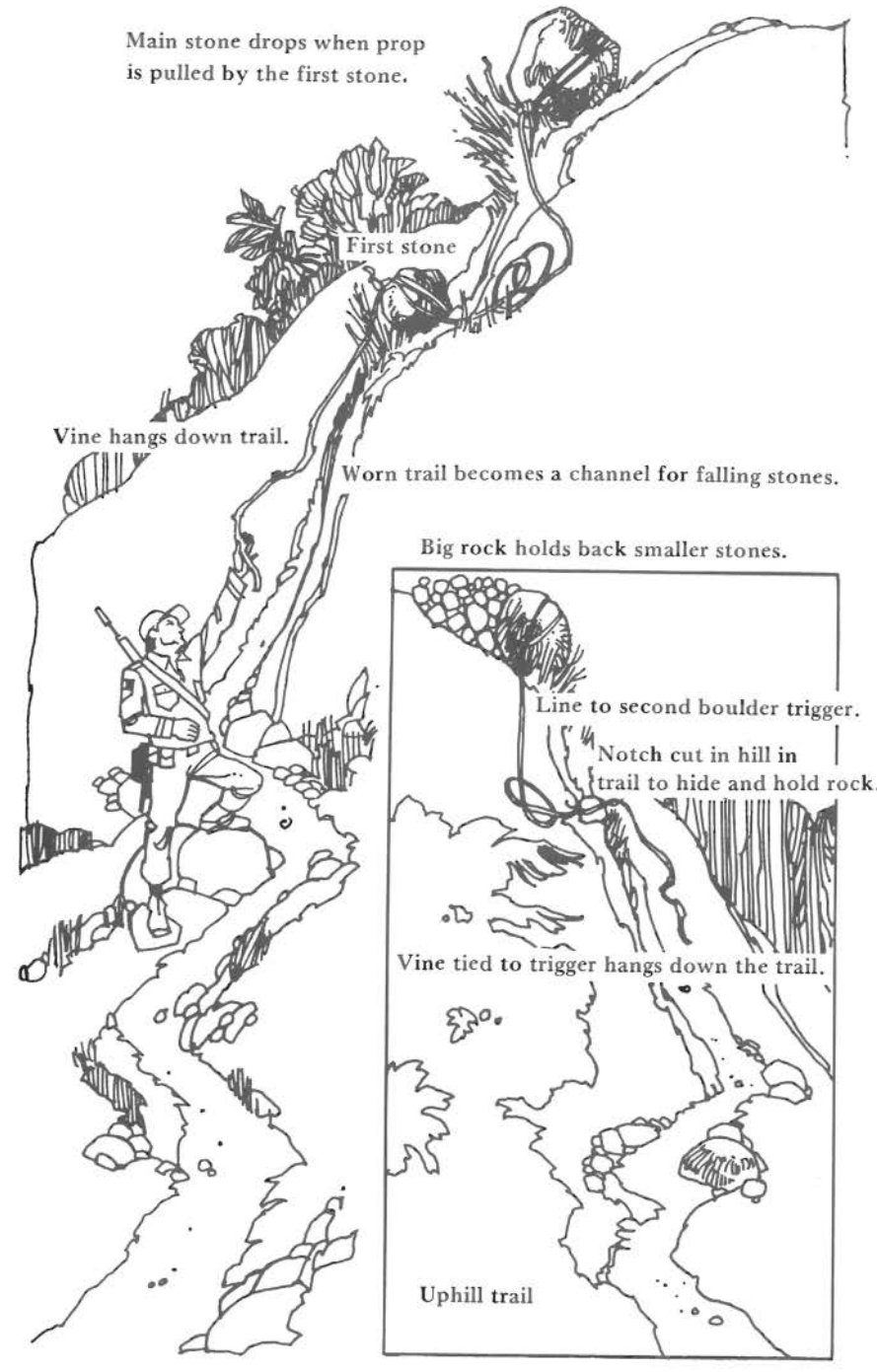
I have on several occasions tried to use "vines" to set up trap triggers: once in the Philippines in central Mindanao near Marawi City and another time when I was in East Africa. Vines don't work well at all and, although I have never tried to use them, braided leather rope or gut lines must also be a pain to use. I have nothing but admiration for the Indians who put up with these kinds of materials and, in spite of sun and snow, made them work.

One of the devices the Sheepeaters used to protect their territory was a rock chute trap. Sometimes the device was a pure trap triggered by intruders, while other times it was a setup triggered by the Indians themselves as they retreated from their enemies. They would position larger rocks in such a way that they were channeled down a trail the enemy would be likely to use to reach the Sheepeaters' hideout.

As with all mantraps, the critical element is the terrain. The trap has to be constructed on a steep path in a place where rocks are common. A reasonably alert person is going to be immediately suspicious if a rock is perched above him someplace along his path. If that's the only rock for a thousand meters, the trap is then immediately compromised.

Using the path as a channel for the falling stone implies more than just counting on the victim to come up the mountain at that place. The idea is to hold the rock in a chute or channel so that its direction of fall will be more predictable.

It may come as a shock to flatlanders, but not all mountains have rocks on them that will readily roll downhill. In some cases it takes a bit of luck to get the



rock to slide, much less roll. A second point to consider when building a rock chute trap is that the stone need not be terribly large. Most of the time, position is much more important than size. I find that having even a twenty-kilogram stone dropped from as little as six meters is terribly discouraging.

You can set up a dynamite trigger system by tying a two-meter piece of line to the trip bar of a figure four and hanging the vine down the path. If the trappee doesn't actually pull on the vine to help himself up the hill, he will at least bump it, triggering the trap. Of course if you have a longer piece of line or wire, the trap

The Sheepeaters lived in remote, high-mountain regions of the Rocky Mountains on terrain similar to that above.

can be set up so that a fairly hefty stone will skid fifty meters or more down an access path, grinding up any hapless souls who are in the way.

In this case, the simplest trigger is very often the best. I used this trap in Ethiopia in 1968. We attached the pull line on one end to a stake holding the rock and tied the other end to a rock. The line was covered and hidden a bit off to the side of the trail. These traps served more as warning mechanisms than anything, so at times the installation was not all that well done. One morning, three of us put in seven traps. Obviously they were not works of art.

Perch the rock to which the trip line is tied in the middle of the path where it will be certain to be dislodged by anyone coming up the trail. Leave enough slack in the line so that the falling stone gathers sufficient momentum to pull the prop on the trap stone. The little stone traps can be set up virtually anywhere a mountain trail takes a sharp turn uphill. It isn't much work to carry a stone over to the proper place and whittle out a figure-four trigger. Using larger stones requires more coordination between Mother Nature and yourself.

If a native rock is in the correct place and can be dug out and balanced at the top of a channeled trail, then it will work. If not, there isn't much you can do to improve the situation.

The one time I used this trap, I was really surprised to discover that the people on whom the rocks were falling did not realize until the third or fourth time what was going on. I guess they thought it was just bad luck that boulders kept rattling down around their ears! We were using smaller rock traps triggered with the vine system previously mentioned. The entire group eventually climbed up to the vicinity of our camp, but not before several got bashed pretty good.

3. CZECHO-SLOVAKIAN TANK BREAKER

For this trap I am indebted to an absolutely nuts Hungarian named Renton Vadliskii. I don't know how or why Mr. Vadliskii ever got into the United States, much less how he became a citizen. But he was here, and I for one will never be the same.

Renton moved into a cabin up in the hills near Troy, Montana, when I was living there. He was a kind of warped mechanical genius who, for the most part, had invented a machine that would automatically split and resaw cedar shakes. At one time there was quite a cedar industry around Troy, so Renton fit right in.

Besides trying to scam investors with his automatic shake machine, crazy Vadliskii spent his time practicing martial arts. He scared people so much that even the hulking old lumberjacks in the area never took him on. The only one who ever did take him on, though, was little old Pete Black, who worked as a feller. Pete stood about five feet eight inches, but he was as tough as nails. Pete always said he didn't care about Vadliskii. "Let him try and kick a load of shot," Pete always said.

One day Renton got tough with Pete. My little old buddy pulled out his Winchester Model 1200 out of his Bronco and knocked Vadliskii out flat with a load of #6 duck shot. When Renton recovered, he moved off to Kodiak Island in Alaska. About three years later a

load of logs fell on him, ending any association I ever had with crazy Hungarians.

Truth is stranger than fiction and, in this case, readers are going to have to take my word for it that the following story is exactly as told to me by Vadliskii.

It seems Mr. Vadliskii wore out his welcome in the place of his birth when the Soviets arrived in Budapest in 1956. From Hungary he moved to Leviče in Czechoslovakia. Apparently it was in Leviče, or perhaps some city nearby, that the following incident occurred. (I can't remember exactly where it was, but when the Soviets occupied Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1968, good old Renton was trained and ready. I can't imagine how Mr. Vadliskii lived in Czechoslovakia from 1956 through 1968 without getting into a bad fight and getting killed, but apparently he did!)

The Soviet pattern of action when fighting poorly armed city guerrillas is to launch huge, punitive expeditions against the positions held by the freedom fighters. They often used three or four T34 or T54 tanks as a team to blast down whole buildings on top of the freedom fighters. In that capacity, the Soviets sent their armor right up through the narrow streets and alleys to blast and crunch their way into positions held by partisans. (Until I traveled there in 1978, I never realized how many buildings had been shot up in Czechoslovakia, but apparently shot-up buildings were quite common.)

Usually doing so was reasonably safe and probably pretty much fun for the Soviet crews. They covered each other fairly well. Anybody who stuck his nose out was risking an instant trashing. Besides that, there really isn't much that one can use to fight back. (Americans don't seem to realize that common household chemicals, agricultural fertilizer, battery acid, or even gasoline that can be used to make explosives and bombs are virtually impossible to acquire in communist countries. Even if one found an open gas station, the chances

of also finding someone with a car who had the coupons needed to buy petrol are virtually nonexistent.)

On several occasions we had an opportunity to talk about what happened over a bottle of brandy. I believe what Renton told me is true. At any rate, he never lied that I know of except to bankers whom he was trying to get to invest in his shake machine and, of course, women.

Mr. Vadliskii said that he and his friends knew that several tanks were assigned to one area on a regular basis as a kind of patrol. Everyone was pretty scared, so they didn't even throw rocks at the tanks. As a result, the tank crews grew bolder and bolder. (The account would make more sense if Renton had been talking about armored personnel carriers instead of tanks. He might have been referring to APCs without knowing it, but "tank" was the word he used.)

Renton and about fifty of his buddies scrounged a thirty-cm steel I-beam out of one of the wrecked buildings. It was, he said, at least eight meters long, so it probably really did take thirty people to carry the thing off, like he said.

The partisans positioned a short span of trolley track, which they tore out of the main line, across a narrow side alley along the route the tanks usually traveled. I know firsthand that most Czech cities have dozens of tiny side streets or alleys bordered on both sides by four-story row houses, so the plan sounded reasonable. Apparently, they put the steel track across roof to roof as a support for the I-beam. Using a piece of wire rope, they hoisted the I-beam enough so that it would swing with a good deal of enthusiasm out into the main drag, where the tanks ran.

Renton Vadliskii drew a picture of the trigger for me. Like all good, effective devices, it was the model of simplicity. The I-beam was rigged so that it was held back by a wooden beam that was jammed into a notch which had been chopped out of the alley floor. A kind of teeter-totter board extended out into the road. When the tank drove across the trigger board, it dropped away

European cities with their narrow streets and tiny alleys provide ideal opportunities for the mantrapper.

from the beam allowing the I-beam to swing out into the main road.

According to a picture that Renton drew for me, they also rigged a line on the holdback beam that appears to be absolutely ingenious. As soon as the holdback was upset, the line pulled the beam down out of the way of the I-beam, allowing it to swing freely. To hear Renton tell it, the tank commander didn't mind driving over trash in the streets, so the board trigger worked quite well.

I asked Mr. Vadliskii if they sharpened the I-beam or otherwise tried to fashion the ram end into something

other than a blunt instrument. Over the course of several years and three or four different discussions about the incident, I got several conflicting answers. Either he didn't remember or he didn't want to say for some reason or another.

At any rate, when the trap was set, several of their party sniped at a Soviet patrol. A couple of days later, the tanks came by again as a demonstration of force. The first one tripped the trigger, sending the I-beam crashing into the side of the machine at full force. Either it knocked out an idler sprocket or it cut the track itself. Either way, the machine was immobilized.

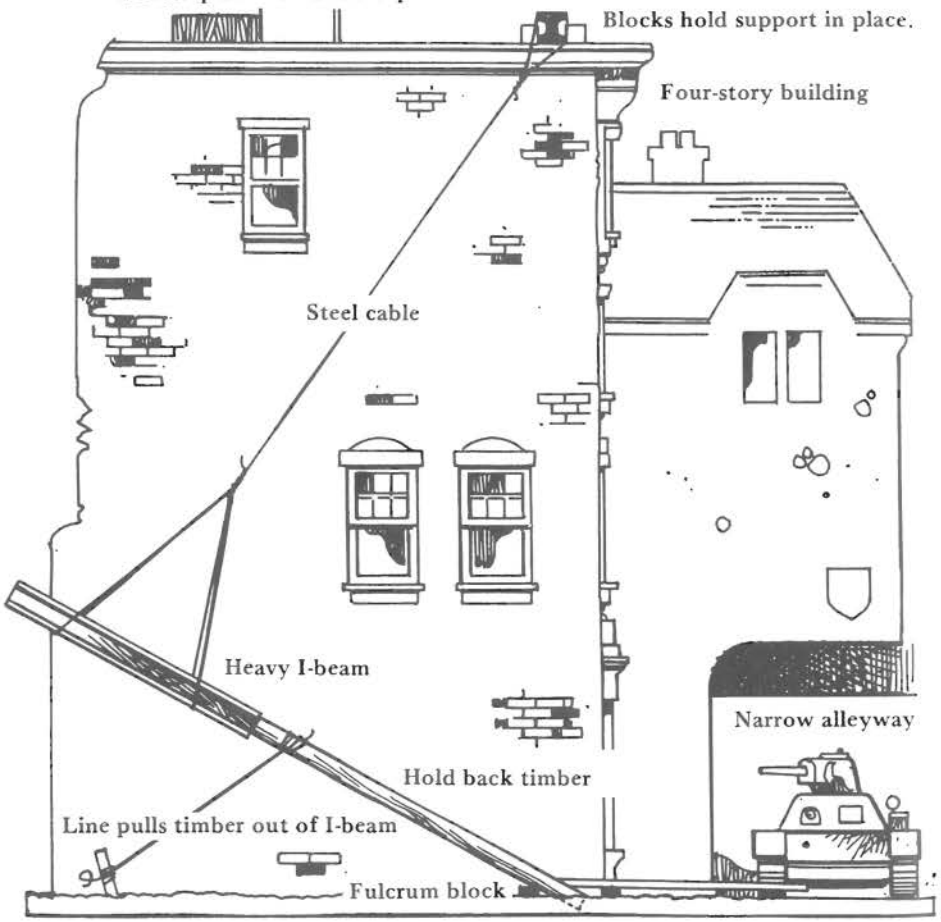
In response, the tank crew shot up the alley with its heavy machine gun. I asked Renton what damage was done. He told me the noise was deafening. Again, I think I lost something in the translation!

After a bit, the second tank pushed the first tank on about fifty meters. The tanks stalled out, and the crews gave that up as a bad game. The tanks continued to fire their machine guns from time to time. There was no effort by the partisans to do anything other than to try to see what was happening, albeit from very great distances.

After about three hours of mucking around, the crew from the stricken tank suddenly abandoned their machine and bolted over to the two remaining tanks. These in turn withdrew back up the street. According to Renton, the partisans occupied the stranded tank that night. They found that all of the machine-gun ammo had been expended. Several key parts were missing from the guns themselves. There were only eight rounds of ammo for the 73-mm main gun in the tank.

They didn't make any attempt to haul off the ammo. "The projectiles were nondetonating armor-piercing," Renton said. "We couldn't think of any use for them." They were probably right to leave the ammo, although I personally would have been sorely tempted to find some use for the ammo rather than just leave it there.

They debated the fate of the tank and decided not



Once the line on the hold-back beam is triggered, it pulls the beam down out of the way of the I-beam, allowing the I-beam to freely swing into the street and into a tank.

to burn it because of the threat to the buildings along the narrow street. Vadliskii said they ruined every gear box as well as the engine. Perhaps they did, but it sounds to me like they let a good idea die on the vine for lack of a good follow-through plan.

Next morning a platoon of Soviet soldiers arrived with a tank retriever, and that was the end of that.

4. SNAKE TRAPS

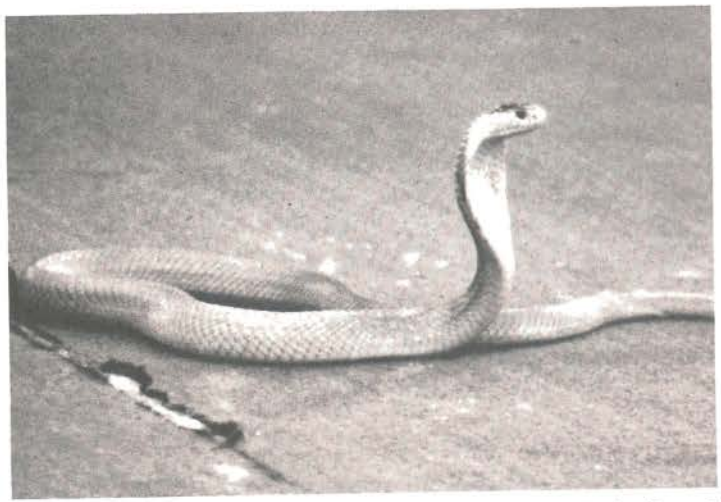
We never did find out for sure who was responsible, but someone put some kind of little brown African snake in our two holer. The boys who caught and killed it said it was very, very poisonous. I assume if it would have bit one of us on the behind, it would have been almost instantly fatal.

We were camped west of Chisimaio in the East African country of Somalia on the Kenya border when the incident occurred. Our job was in part to monitor the comings and goings of the Somali Shifta along the border. Later on, the local Shifta leader became friendly and actually spent quite a bit of time in our camp. Up till shortly after the snake incident, however, we never saw these guys.

Usually our camp boys did not feel any particular compelling need to use our canvas-and-wood comfort station. I never learned to speak even a little Somali, so I don't know for sure but suspect such facilities were greeted with a mixture of amusement, curiosity, and apprehension.

At any rate, whoever planted the little beast knew something about Europeans and their curious habits. They were foiled, however, by Africans acting outside of their customary pattern. Whether out of curiosity or whatever, they found the snake.

We knew the snake was planted and didn't just crawl



Traps set with poisonous snakes can be both psychologically and physically devastating.

into the biffy. At every camp we made we had the workers clear away all the brush and high grass. We also asked the locals to bring in cattle with which to graze the immediate area down to the ground. Snakes are fearful of being stepped on by cattle. Without grass cover and with cattle around, they just won't stay in the area. Under these circumstances, we absolutely never had snakes of any kind in any of our camps.

This was the first time I encountered a snake trap. Regular readers may remember the account of the trap a drug lord set for us in northern Thailand. It's detailed in my book *Ragnar's Ten Best Traps,* and is the second time in thirty years someone used this ploy on me.

In Thailand the local drug boss or some of his men hung little green adders from the ceiling of an abandoned and dark factory. The plan was for us to run into them and get bit on the face and neck. It would have worked except that the snakes were put up too soon.

As a result, I have concluded that if the trapper can get the poison snakes and not be afraid to handle them,

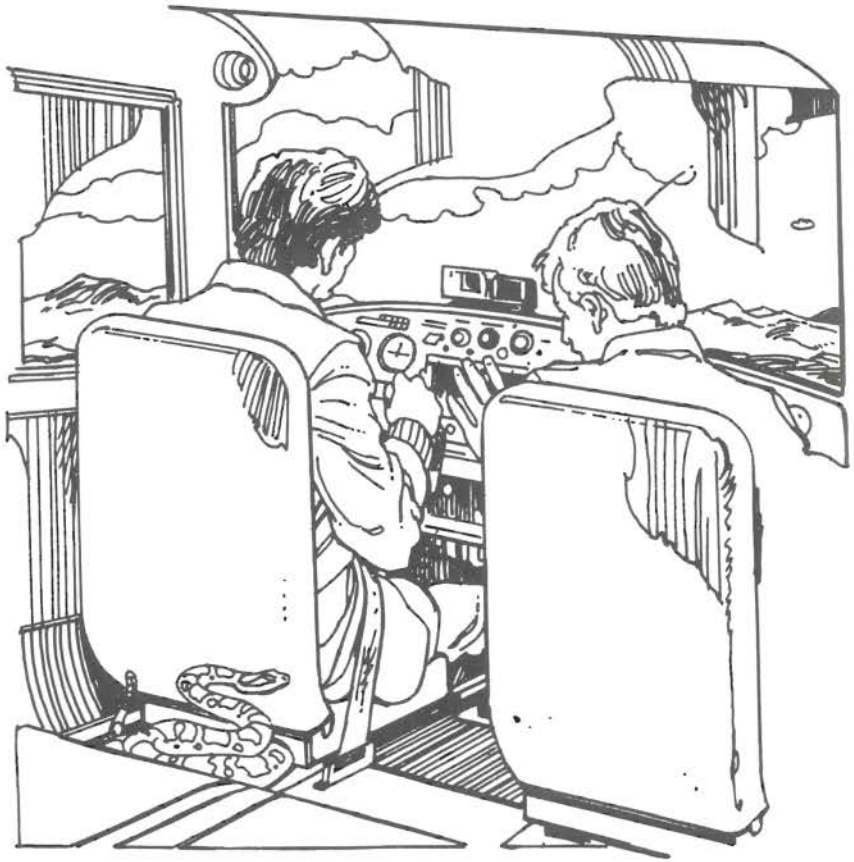
and if he can get close to the victim, this type of trap has tremendous merit.

That's a lot of if's, but suppose you get a snake into a guy's car and it lies under the seat for a day or so till the victim decides to go someplace. Then the reptile gets riled up and bites the guy on the leg, and he dies two days after being bitten. Who does the opposing force blame? How do they find the perpetrator? The psychological impact of this type of trap is tremendous. In the case of an airplane, this situation will almost certainly guarantee the death of a valuable, costly person and may do in the crew and machine as well.

If I were operating in a paramilitary context, I would watch for opportunities such as these. Rather than just killing and perhaps eating any snakes I might run across, I would certainly try to capture them alive and put them in my weapons inventory. Whenever an opportunity came up, the necessary equipment (the snake) would already be in hand. Snakes—or even scorpions would probably work—could be taken from their keeping place and selectively spotted around in places where the enemy or his friends were likely to be.

Apparently a trap of this sort was actually used in the western United States a few years back. As I understand it, a fellow finally got fed up with his writer neighbor who had continually published unfair and untrue stories about him. He caught a big, old rattlesnake and cut the rattles off so it couldn't give warning and put it in the guy's rural mailbox. I don't know this firsthand, but I was told the ploy should have worked. The rattler bit the writer on the hand when he reached in for his mail. The snake, however, either didn't bite him very hard, or it was weak and anemic. The victim lived through the attack without the loss of anything more than a couple of weeks of time.

For a trap like this to work, the snake has to be placed in a closed environment. Obviously it won't work to slip the critter into a tent set up on a dirt floor or even on a wood platform. Snakes are not generally



A snake placed in the cockpit of an airplane can create instant havoc.

aggressive, especially if they have been caught and handled by humans. Once let go, they are going to get as far away as possible. If there is a crack or a hole through which they can slither, you—or, more important, the intended victim—will never see the snake again.

On the other hand, a mountain tent with a solid sewn-in floor that is in good condition is perfect. Should the trapper be able to sneak in and release the snake

inside the tent, he can be reasonably sure it will be there all rested up, ready to go later on when the time comes.

Other places I would think about using are the water barrel if it's a dip-it-yourself arrangement, the food box, footlockers, or even troop trucks. I have never heard of it happening, but I'll bet the results would be incredibly good if someone threw a snake into one of the packed troop trucks in Laos or Campuchea as the troops drove through the small towns or villages on the way to the front.

I have never seen it firsthand but take the word of GIs who tell me that the North Vietnamese used snakes to protect their tunnel systems. I understand they tied the snakes to the support beams at the entrance to the tunnels or from the ceiling down inside the workings. There is probably an element of truth to these accounts. If tied far enough back, the snake would probably live and be active for several weeks. It might even be better if the snake were tethered on the ground. On the other hand, snakes that are hanging—as we discovered—soon become exhausted and die.

It would seem like an awful lot of work to keep replacing the dead and dying reptiles every few days in the uncertain and unlikely event that an intruder would start down a particular tunnel system. For that reason, the story of the snake in the tunnel in Vietnam may be apocryphal.

At any rate, this trap concept is being used throughout the world and could be used by the paramilitarist. It is also nice to know about these kinds of traps so that one can try to avoid walking into them.

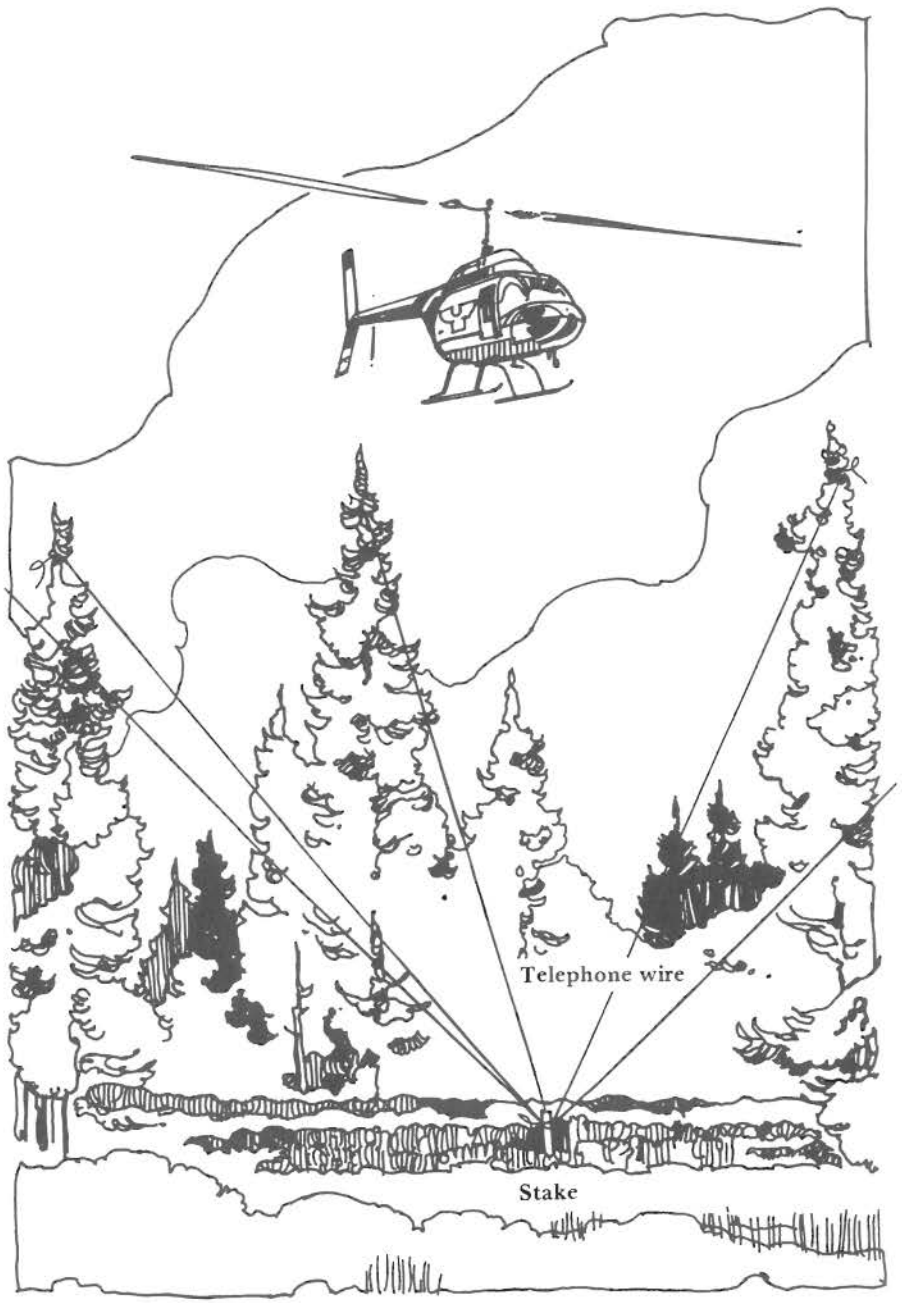
5. OREGON HELICOPTER TRAP

I am indebted to the marijuana growers of Oregon for this trap idea.

Back in the early Seventies, a real brouhaha developed when the U.S. Forest Service announced that it was going to spray its forest land with 2-4-D to kill the lush, rapidly growing underbrush that threatened to overwhelm the growing pine forests in parts of Oregon. Since the Oregon marijuana growers could not take a direct frontal approach to stopping an activity that threatened to break their rice bowls, they did the next most logical thing and organized an attack on the chemical and the general wisdom of allowing its use. They were apparently supported with money from California growers who logically figured that they could be next, if they didn't stop the 2-4-D program cold in its tracks in Oregon.

The battle was a genuine donneybrook, one I enjoyed and still remember with fondness today. I am certain readers will remember these times with nostalgia. Oregon is and was an ideal place to organize this type of improbable exercise. The good citizens quickly joined ranks in support of the growers in opposition to those nasty agricultural chemicals that were about to pollute their lands.

The growers group got out a nicely done brochure with diagrams showing exactly how one might set an



One end of some telephone wire should be tied to a stake in the center of a clearing, while the other end is tied to the tops of tall trees around the clearing.

effective trap for the spray helicopters. The growers very valiantly theorized that if they got just one chopper, it would end any Forest Service spraying and, because they had correctly politicized the issue, their action would not impinge on public sympathies even if they killed a couple of pilots. (I thought at the time that there was an excellent lesson to be learned from the group's actions if one could only transfer their techniques to critical environmental or defense issues. It isn't what is done but, more important, how the issue is presented to the public.)

To make the device work, the group suggested swiping a couple of miles of telephone wire. Telephone wire is just about the correct thickness, is already weathered, and isn't immediately obvious when the trap is set up.

String the wire from the very top of a tall tree down into the center of a small clearing. The skill involved in this case is knowing what size clearings helicopters are likely to use. Depending on the pilot, the chopper will try to get in close to the ground in as many places as possible. Watching the chopper operate for a morning is the best way I know of to get a handle on what kind of clearing will be large enough to lure a chopper in to its destruction. It's the mantrapper's equivalent of on-the-job training. In a military context, an LZ is always obvious. These traps have the added advantage of not restructuring the use of the clearing to the defenders while in place.

After doing time observing, most people will agree that there are lots of good spots in which to waylay a chopper (such as forests) since helicopters don't require much space in which to operate.

Stake the wire in the center of the clearing, tying one end of the wire to the top of a tree. The wire should not be taut. Don't mash the brush down or allow the wire to pull on tree limbs or in any way signal its existence. Remember that from day one, chopper pilots are trained to avoid wire because even a small amount is so horribly devastating.

The purpose of this trap is to have the wire wrap into the chopper's rotor head so that the chopper becomes entangled. You are not trying to make a solid set that will bring down the machine. Ideally, the tied ends should break loose, allowing the wire to wrap on the rotor pitch change rods, thereby depriving the pilot of the use of the controls with which to pitch the rotor. In a tight spot, the effect is dramatic.

It is better to have more than one wire if there are more tall trees around. Obviously, this takes more wire than even marijuana farmers can afford. That's why it is appropriate to have the local phone company as an unwitting partner in this operation. Sometimes its wire is a little too light, but it is commonly available in large quantities and, unlike power-transmission lines, it is not dangerous to take down. It also takes quite a long time before the phone company realizes someone has nabbed its lines.

The only other item that will help this trap is some bait. If at all possible, bait with whatever material a critter is looking for or attracted to. This advice is sound no matter what kind of trap is set. (Bait traps for American business executives with money, politicians with women, mink and fox with pheasant or quail feathers, and raccoons with peanut butter and honey.)

Give some thought to using bait that will attract the intended quarry, and then don't hesitate to use it.

6. AFGHAN TANK FALL

This trap has lots and lots of applications wherever reasonably heavy equipment is run down hilly roads and where the trapper can get a bit of freefall height to work with. The idea comes out of Afghanistan, having been developed by the Mujahideen freedom fighters.

The concept behind the trap is to undermine a portion of a much-used road and then prop it up enough so that cars and light trucks will cross, while tanks, APCs or self-propelled guns will crash through. The trap could be a bridge or culvert that has been worked over by the trapping crew. Since such places are generally pretty well watched, the trap is tough to install and even tougher to keep hidden.

North Americans, especially those living in the East, tend to have a very sketchy view of what conditions are like in the Third World. Either they think the Afghans or the Filipinos, for instance, have roads like those in the United States, or they go to the other extreme and assume there are no roads at all.

A kind of middle view is actually more correct. Even in really backwater places like Belize or Afghanistan, there are a lot of roads. The problem is that they are usually unballasted, ungraded, poorly maintained muddy tracks that wind and twist. Many times of the year they are impassable, even to four-wheel-drive vehicles. On the other hand, a surprising amount of traffic

Where there are steep mountain roads—and you have plenty of hand labor at your disposal—the potential always exists to send military vehicles to the bottom of a gully, using nothing more than picks and shovels.

carrying an incredible amount of goods sometimes passes over these trails. I personally have seen huge amounts of garlic, onions, peppers, cabbage, mangoes, and other produce coming out of Burma into northern Thailand over paths I found difficult to walk.

In this case, you need to find a place along the road that borders a steep bank. The drop needn't be far. Under good conditions, for example, three meters of fall is enough to dump an APC. Plan to cut out a space under the road at least twice the length of the vehicle you intend to trap. This may entail doing a huge amount of work. Be sure you have the manpower available before getting started.

Also remember the rules about hiding telltale material dug from the roadbed and putting back the tire tracks that were there when you started.

After the roadbed is excavated a bit, a log platform is started underneath to hold things up. Sometimes it is possible to do virtually the entire excavating job. In other cases, the roadbed must be propped as you go, much like shoring up a mine tunnel. The idea is to build a platform, like a door, that will collapse when something heavy crosses over it. Usually the best method is to survey the site and then precut the timbers away from the site before the digging work actually begins.

The Afghan tank trap requires a trigger, but like many of the traps in this volume, it can be quite rudimentary. In many cases, something no more sophisticated than weakened support beams will do. However, a trigger I suggested takes advantage of the fact that a lot of military equipment is very heavy and really shakes the ground.

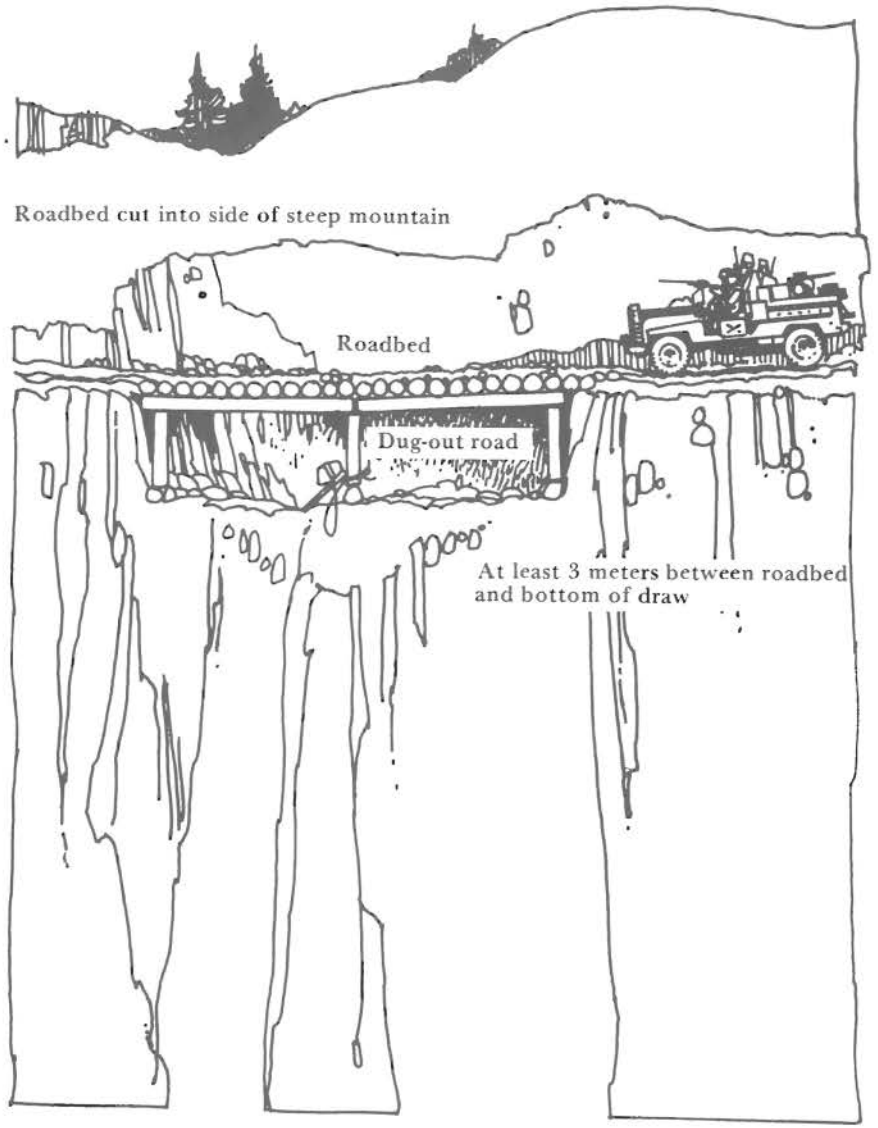
Two rocks can be placed on inclines under the road so that when they are severely shaken, they will roll off their base, pulling a wire that in turn will trip out one or two of the upright support beams. Without support, the machine will—if the trapper calculated correctly—crush the remaining support, allowing the entire road to give way.

Military equipment such as these trucks can be "maneuvered" into a gully using the Tank Fall Trap.

Try to rig the outfit so the target vehicle rolls over and does not slide. Even if you cannot destroy the rig after it has rolled and the enemy successfully retrieves it, the machine will never be the same. Too much of the internal workings are bent and twisted to make salvage practical. Under ideal circumstances an enemy tank or APC might be dumped into a river or lake. Even a relatively short drop onto rocks (say, ten meters) will burst the idler sprockets and transmission on a tracked vehicle. You may even end up cracking the engine block!

Sometimes heavy equipment is tough to deal with. This trap won't really have any long-term effect on the enemy's firepower. It can, however, be a real morale booster under the correct circumstances.

Since roads are put in to carry vehicles, trying to get a tank to fall in with traffic moving on the road can be



You can take advantage of a naturally occurring wash to dig out a road and support it with a log structure. Set a board on a rock at an angle so that when heavy equipment crosses, a rock can roll down and pull a support beam. One alternative to this trap is to place undersized supports when the trap is being built.

a real trick. Ideally, the road can be closed or traffic diverted around for a couple of weeks. In reality, it's never that easy.

Usually the best plan is to put the support platform in under the guise of doing road repairs. The ones I heard about while in Pakistan were put up in Afghanistan in places where the entire roadbed slumped off into a stream below. Afghan workers moved in and built a log trestle to hold up the old roadbed and had the job done before anybody had the time to think about it. The support beams were installed on an angle so that they collapsed when heavy equipment tried to cross.

Friends tell me there is a huge amount of Soviet armor resting in gulleys in Afghanistan. Either the Russian drivers are careless and irresponsible, or the partisans are getting quite a number of the Red Bear's machines. The Tank-Fall Trap is dynamite and can boost the morale of a small band of freedom fighters immeasurably. It is a matter of great pride to know that by just using axes, saws, and shovels, one has succeeded in getting one of the enemy's big guns.

7. HEAVY-DUTY TRIGGER

I have purposely not said much about triggers thus far for two reasons. First, most traps covered in this volume are designed to use a trigger that is unique to that trap or they don't require a trigger at all. Knowledge and application of additional triggers is handy but certainly not essential. Second, I felt that, if anything, the portion on triggers in my first volume on mantrapping was too lengthy. Yet, as several people have pointed out, there is a hole in my trigger repertoire.

How does one drop a really heavy load using a trigger that still has some sensitivity but is not dangerous, they ask. The type of load we are talking about in this case is in the one-ton range. A drop half that weight doesn't present that many problems. One over one thousand kilograms becomes a real pain if all the trapper has are the triggers described in *Mantrapping*.

The pins bend, ropes break, blocks split, and the thing becomes erratic—going off when it shouldn't and not going off when it should.

The advantages of sometimes using a really heavy drop are certainly obvious. There are places, especially when the men you may be after are in vehicles, where a light load just won't cut it. The best general system I know of is to use a tough, strong fulcrum piece and dump the load off of it. The only heavy rope or wire you'll then need will be a relatively short section from

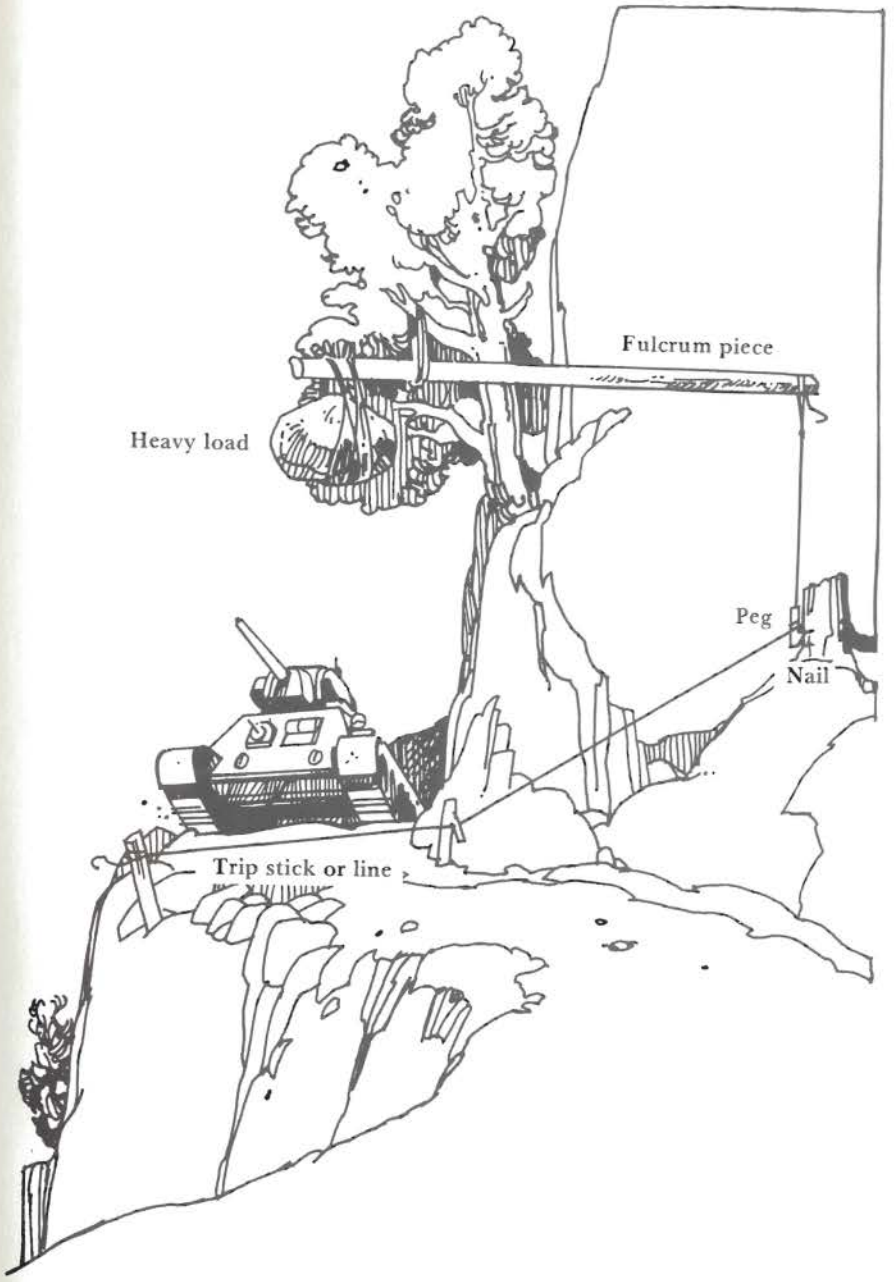
the load to the fulcrum piece and from the fulcrum to the load-support member. Be sure to use a tough enough fulcrum piece or it will break, dumping the weight on the trap-setter.

Probably the greatest disadvantage to constructing this design is getting the log hung way up in the air where it can do some good. Because the trigger is sensitive, the process can be truly tough. I have no good suggestion other than to count on using a lot of helpers!

In the early Seventies I spent time on Taiwan looking at the prospects for sustaining a paramilitary operation there should the need arise. One of the places I visited was a city on the isolated remote east coast called Hualien. The first time I went in to Hualien was by plane, so I didn't realize what I was getting into.

Hualien is a nice, modern, and clean city that was then small enough to be truly enjoyable. The problem is, the city is virtually cut off from the rest of Taiwan. A range of impassable 3,500-meter mountains runs down through the center of the country, effectively blocking land access except by the most tortuous road. A winding, four-hundred-kilometer log/goat trail runs down from Taipei through the mountains to Hualien. By air, the thirty-minute flight to the trail's end covers 125 kilometers. In contrast, road time is a minimum of twelve hours.

The road defies description. In most places it is no wider than a sidewalk suitable for small, four-wheel drive Japanese trucks—and that's all. There are no guardrails. In most places the drop-off is two hundred to five hundred meters! The few paved sections are in areas where the cut into the canyon wall has given way and allowed the road to wash into the chasm below. The Chinese rebuilt the road by putting in a kind of cantilever platform. The road was originally completed about 1955 when the Taiwanese felt an amphibious assault from the mainland was imminent. As I remember, the official figure was that over two hundred fifty people died hacking that cliffhanger through the mountains.



A tank can trip a heavy wire placed across a road, thereby causing a large load of rocks to fall onto the tank.

I personally can't think of a single road or trail in the entire world that people commonly drive on that is more treacherous than this one. We looked at the prospects of closing the road by using only hand-labor and nonexplosive devices.

Thousands of big rocks hung precariously on the canyon walls above that could easily have been rolled down at a time of need. The real problem was keeping the road open and not closing it at all. The surrounding mountains were an ideal sanctuary for guerrillas. It seldom snowed, there were few roads, and many small mountain meadows had soil deep enough in which to raise a garden.

One of the suggestions I made was that some instruction be given showing the people how to set up a trap that would enable the user to drop huge rocks on tanks. We rigged the boulders with a trigger virtually identical to the one described previously in this chapter.

Taiwan was never invaded. Given a few more years on the present course, and the mainlanders won't have to invade. All they will need to do is absorb, so the trap idea probably will never be used.

8. COSTA RICAN BRIDGE TRAP

For reasons that will soon be obvious, I have never repeated the story of our swinging bridge trap. Though the entire episode has been a huge source of embarrassment to us, the trap concept is, nevertheless, a good one that has potential in many places in the world.

The saga began when we were kids on the farm, perhaps about nine, ten, or eleven years old. A meandering creek ran through the pasture, keeping us from easily accessing the north fields and our wood lot. It got downright troublesome to have our boots filled with ice water while we waded across the creek, or not being able to hunt in some of the distant fields due to the fact that getting to them was so tough.

We kept a few cattle on our farm and fed them a couple of bales of hay per day during the winter. By the time spring rolled around and the grass started to green again, we usually had accumulated an absolute mountain of old and used baler twine saved from the bales of hay.

My brothers and I decided to untangle the string and braid it into two long heavy ropes, which we intended to make into a suspension bridge. At the time, Dad was rebuilding the corn crib and had a pile of unused scrap 1 by 2 boards that would work nicely as flooring for the bridge.

The three of us braided the line and set a support

post on one side of the creek. A big, old sycamore was our anchor on the other side. We strung the support lines and the drop lines a few centimeters above the water at flood stage. The entire project involved a huge amount of work, but we got the bridge together and working within a couple of weeks.

We used the bridge a couple of times without incident. What we failed to realize is that we had set the main support lines too low and too close together, and the whole structure was a potential death trap.

One day I came down to the bridge and found my brother tangled in the lines hanging in the creek. He had unbalanced the structure while crossing, caught a foot in the support when the bottom tipped up, and literally hung himself in the water. If the current had not been fairly swift under the bridge, my brother would have sunk like a stone and drowned. We got him out in good shape, but the incident shook us up quite a bit.

The trick to getting this trap to work is to carefully adjust the height and width of the main support lines. If the lines are low and close together, the bridge will be very unstable and a casual user could easily drown. Properly set, the trap will catch the victim's foot rather than just dump him over the edge, and his natural response would be to try to stay on the bridge, thereby creating an even more hopeless tangle. He won't fall over; instead he will hang over the edge of the water.

The trap must be strung out so that it is so close to the water that when a user crosses the bridge, it will actually sag so much that your victim will wet his feet. The design will not work to simply dump the victim out into a deep chasm.

I fiddled around with this design quite a lot when I was working in the city of Platanila in the Golfo Dulce region of Costa Rica. A bridge trap was a natural there because of the thousands of similar bridges throughout the region which the peasants used to get over the small streams and swamps.

Since bridges were commonplace and heavily used, there was no need to hide the traps. The fact that they were so common hid them. It was proof of the old saw that the best place to hide a tree is in the forest.

We tinkered with the bridge, but the changes were so subtle that even those who have used these kinds of bridges for years and years can't tell they are walking into a trap. Users will inspect the anchor lines to be sure they are sound, but don't seem to notice any changes in the bridge's basic design.

We built the bridge trap in an attempt to keep a communist guerrilla group that was operating in the area out of our camp. We lived in a small rural village while working on a scheme to teach the farmers how to grow corn. Growing corn in the tropics isn't easy, especially when local rumor has it that some bad guys are lurking in the bush waiting for a chance to get at the gringos.

We set a series of traps around our camp in the hope that they would discourage casual enemy patrolling. Curiosity about basic bridge design kept my interest up: I played around with the Costa Rican bridges until I figured out why our bridge on the farm didn't work.

Everything went along fine for awhile until an old peasant woman got caught in one of our traps. This is, of course, an occupational hazard of this business. The local people didn't buy that explanation and wanted to know who fiddled with the bridges and why.

Paramilitarists using mantraps had best give careful thought to the problems this sort of event precipitates, and be prepared to handle them.

There are things the mantrapper can do. Leaking information through the local grapevine will help. But, of course, the enemy—if they are guerrillas—will get wind of it along with the villagers. This isn't all bad if the exact type of trap remains a secret. Guerrilla night patrols will be cut dramatically, which is, after all, one of the desired results of the traps.

In some cases, it may not even be necessary to build traps if one can do a convincing job of getting out the

In countries which have a lot of creeks and small streams, a suspension bridge like this one can easily be sabotaged.

word that they are being built. In a paramilitary situation where both you and the invaders are uninvited visitors, no one will pay any attention to the grapevine. Leaking information will work well, without any undesirable side effects.

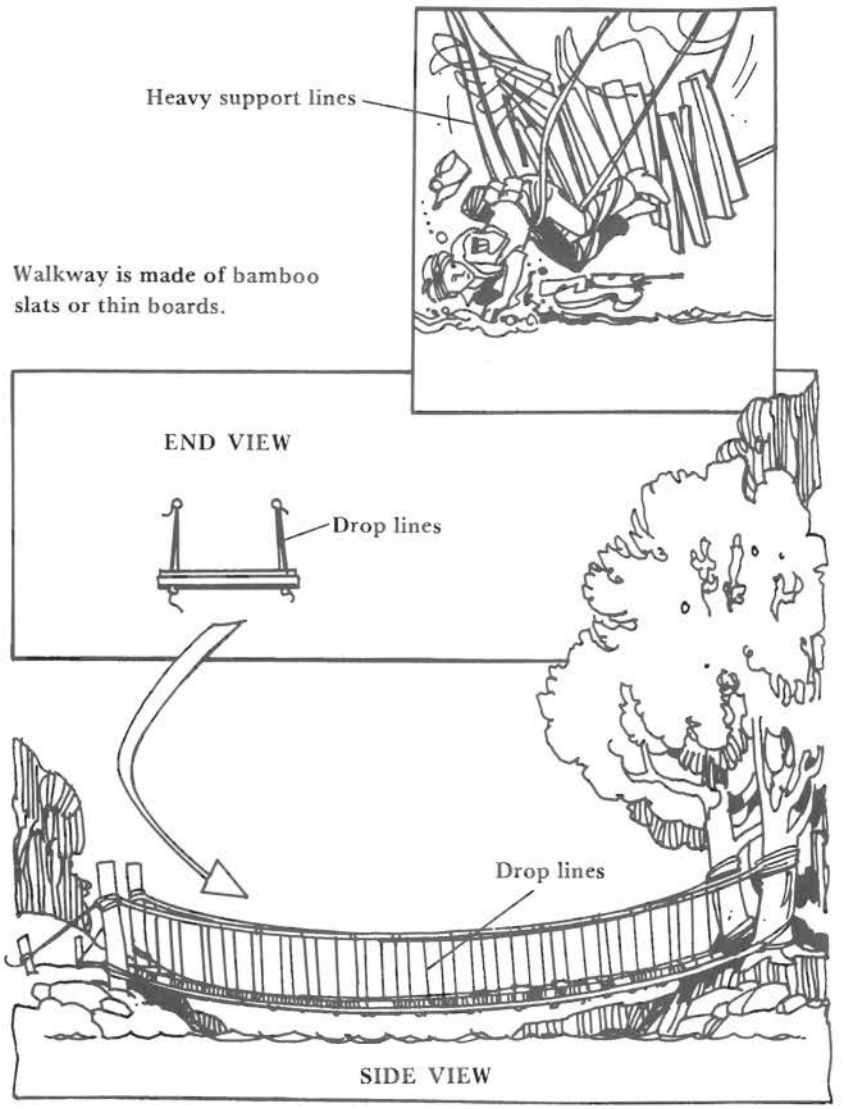
Another way to mitigate the problem is to recruit people from every village in the region and get them to sanction the traps by helping to build them. The duty of keeping his family and friends out of the traps then falls squarely and soundly on the shoulders of the guy who has helped you.

We did none of this in Costa Rica. We simply and foolishly put in the traps by tinkering with the existing bridges. In so doing, we probably added to the strength of the communists. It wouldn't have been so bad for us if they had killed some old folks or even come in the night and stolen their chickens, rice, and beans first. But there was none of that, so it was us who got the heat.

The plan is to make the walkway of the suspension bridge so unstable that it swings sideways, dumping the trappee over the top of one of the support lines, and down into the water.

The key to this trap's success is to keep the support lines low and close to the walk. Invariably the trappee will get his or her foot caught under the support rope on the opposite side over which he/she falls. This will effectively lock the person's foot between the two lines, hanging there till someone cuts the line. If you simply want to catch a guerrilla, it is plausible to hang him over a deep chasm until you return and release him. The victim won't whip out his knife and cut the trap, allowing him to fall into the canyon. He will just hang there praying until the trapper returns.

The design doesn't do well if there are two people on the bridge, even though they may cross it separately. The second guy can cut the trapped person out and, of course, the system is foiled. I believe the trap could possibly catch two people successfully, but I don't know



The heavy main support lines are intentionally set too low and too close together. Once a victim falls off the side of the unstable bridge, he will be trapped and held by the two main support lines.

that to be true from experience.

If this trap design seems tough to figure out, set a trail bridge up and play with it. The dynamics will become immediately obvious.

Having almost lost a brother in a bridge trap and having stirred up the whole countryside around Platanila, I know the damn things will work. It just isn't something I care to talk about very much. The design didn't evolve as a result of any brilliance on our part.

9. GERMAN HEAD CHOPPER

My cousin, who was a Luftwaffe pilot in the great patriotic war, claimed he and his friends developed this little gizmo to while away their spare time and, in the process, kill some Russians.

He said the Russians were so dumb they would often walk right into the thing. However, I don't know how he ever found out if his traps worked. Once the Germans started to retreat, they seldom retook any of the country they lost. I also doubt if any Russian POWs ever volunteered the information that any sergeant lost his head looking into a house in East Germany near the Polish border.

The trap was a piece of fairly heavy-gauge sheet steel on a line set to swing across the entrance when a door is opened. Cousin said his trap worked best in a room with high ceilings because the sheet of steel or tin could then get up enough momentum to do a good cutting job. Other than the fact that the tin would be tough to hide, there is no reason the trap wouldn't work out in the wilds. The trigger is a bit Mickey Mouse but, given a bit of time to make adjustments, probably would work OK.

As a practical matter, it would seem to me that people entering buildings would be especially alert, making them very hard to trap. But that may not always be the case.

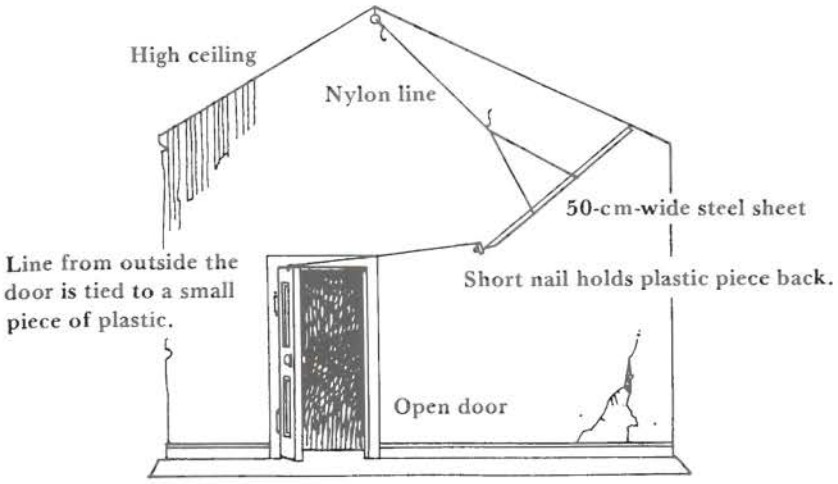
A falling or dropping piece of steel can be lethal. Given even a small amount of momentum, it can do a horrible job of cutting through flesh and bone. As an added benefit, tin is commonly available in most towns and villages, as are rope or wire, a long nail, and rooms with high ceilings.

In my experience fooling around with these hummers, I have found that a light piece of cord works better than wire to swing the tin. Wire is too stiff and does not allow the tin to move fast enough. The ceiling must be high enough so that the tin will swing at about shoulder height without the swing line crossing the door. In this regard, old barns are ideal for this type of trap.

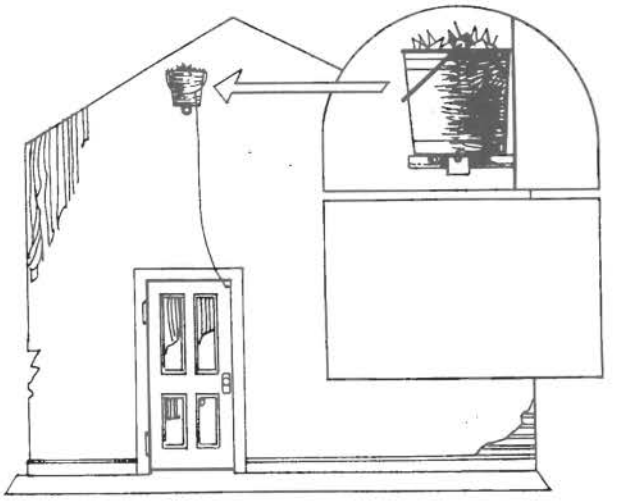
Balance the tin that is supported by the line nailed to the ceiling on a nail driven into the wall away from the door. Give the head chopper as much room to swing as possible since it takes a few minutes for a person to walk through a door. The time the tin takes to gather momentum provides the needed interval to get the trappee into the correct alignment. By swinging the chopper as much as possible, the tin has more momentum and will cut a much better swath.

The trip is accomplished by nailing a loose line to the outside edge of the door. All you want to do is to unbalance the tin off of the holdback nail, and it doesn't take much of a nudge to get that job done. The nail should be very short and can be filed or beaten flat on one side if need be, to hold the tin.

The same basic rig could be set up to dump a bucket of broken glass on an enemy. Traps of this type that I have seen work. Rely on being able to solder a U-bracket on the bottom of a bucket. The U-bracket should be about the same size as a peg placed in the wall above the door. The trapper might consider hiding the bucket outside the door, up under eaves in a roof, for example, so that the bucket dumps its contents as the door is opened. Balance the full bucket of glass shards on the peg and rig a line or a stiff wire or stick



A piece of heavy-gauge sheet metal can be rigged so that once a door is opened, the metal swings in front of the door and slices an unsuspecting victim in half.



A bucket under a porch roof (and over a door) is balanced so that the slightest vibration will cause it to tip. The bucket contains glass and is balanced on a round peg. A "U" bracket is fastened to the bucket bottom and can be greased if necessary. A line is run from the door to the bucket if so needed to tip it.

that will unbalance the bucket when the door is moved. This is usually very easy to set up.

These traps are easy to set and require a minimum amount of easily obtained materials. For that reason, I can understand why my cousin screwed around with them to while away the hours of boredom. In my estimation, the best place for such traps would be a barn or airplane hangar, where locals would be less likely to get into them.

10. MONTAGNARD CROSSBOW

The Hmong hill tribes living in northern Thailand use crossbow traps extensively. I saw such traps a number of times when I worked in the hills of Thailand while trying to find an alternate crop to opium-producing poppies.

The Hmong set the crossbow traps in the trails leading to their villages so that they can fire long distances down or up depending on the trail's terrain. The Hmong also set spear traps if there are lots of trees and heavy brush in which to hide the trap. By using unusually long trip lines, the Hmong effectively stop all movement at night around their villages.

The only thing I ever saw that was caught in one of these traps was a pig, which was speared through by this powerful device. I am sure a man would be killed instantly if he stepped into one of these traps, which is to be set at the correct height to hit him in the torso.

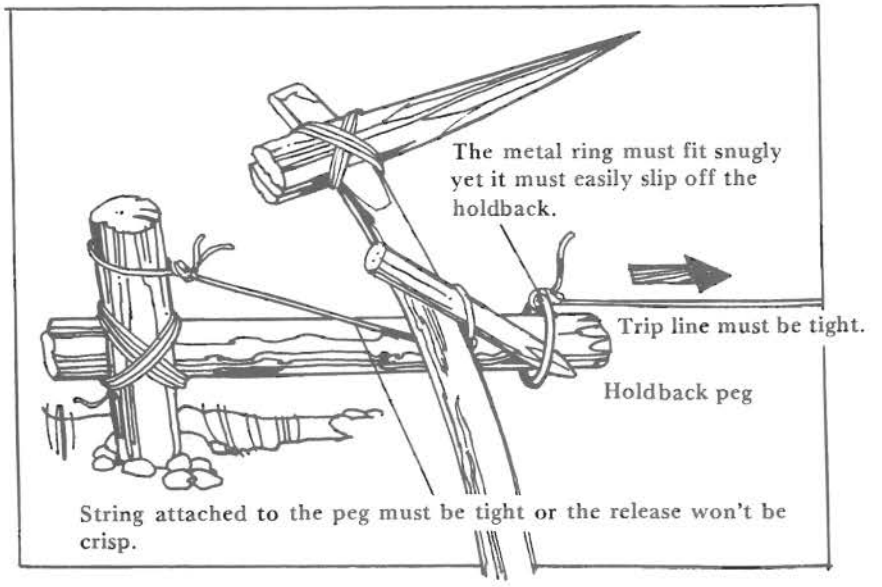
It isn't necessary to actually set up a crossbow out in the field that throws an arrow or bolt. Anything—a twisted rope, a green branch torqued back, or an old car spring that will swing a spear with some enthusiasm—will work.

Probably the greatest single problem using a device that doesn't throw a projectile is to time the trip so that the victim and spear arrive at the same place at the same moment in time.

Small trails into mountain villages can be guarded with spear-type mantraps, and using such trails after dark is therefore not recommended.

The Hmong use green nylon cord to make their trap triggers. Sometimes, however, it rains so much on the Thai/Laotian and Burmese border that the trap might be impossible to set up without nylon line. The Hmong sometimes power their traps with twisted wire or braided leather straps. They also use a piece of hollow bamboo to guide the projectile if, in fact, one is thrown. Also commonly in use are little primitively made crossbows found around the house which are lashed to trees or stakes along the trails. These outfits really lack power. I doubt they would do much damage past a distance of ten meters.

This trap works best when the spring pole is very stiff and tight.



The Hmong do not use poison. In North America, the mantrapper might consider coating his arrows with nicotine sulfate if the stuff is available. I distill it out of old-style Black Flag insecticide.

About the closest I ever came to falling into one of these mantraps occurred when some field guards of the notorious drug overlord Khun Sah ran us off. In the process of getting away, we turned down a small trail into a village right at dark. One of the Thais I was with spotted the trap, which held a dead pig. The incident shook up the tough little Thai border guards so much they quit using the trails till next morning. We walked along the ridge lines and the main vehicle roads.

These types of traps kept us off the trails around the villages but seemed to have kept the drug people's field guards away as well. I am not sure what happened or why, but I am certain that Khun Sah's guys gave up the chase and left us alone. That was OK with me. The guys I saw all carried M16s along with vests loaded with magazines. Some even carried RPG7s; the golden projectile tips were obvious for miles.

The trigger I am suggesting works, but it is not a Southeast Asian design. The Hmong use a neat little ring trigger that I find difficult to make out in the field. (They say the same thing about my figure four.) To use a ring trigger, the trapper is faced with a lengthy trial-and-error job of whittling on the holdback peg. It's either whittle the peg down or carry along wire and try to make the correct-sized rings out in the field. You can otherwise buy the brass rings along with nylon line.

For purposes of instruction, I have included an illustration of a ring trigger, should the reader want to play around with them. It comprises virtually the only reliable, direct-pull trigger I know of, and it can have applications for many other traps.

11. TRAIL WIRE

I can't divulge the exact names, dates, and places, but early in 1982 two American teenage brothers virtually lost their heads in a trail wire-trap apparently set by irate landowners and neighbors. Following their encounter with the trap, a suit for eleven million dollars was filed in district court by their father alleging that the idea came from my first book on setting traps for men. I didn't mention the trap in my first book, but should have. The idea is a good one.

As I understand the incident, the two young men had established a history of ramming around the countryside on their high-powered snowmobiles. They terrorized farmers and their livestock, and ran off all the deer and elk from the hills around the area. Talks with the two did little good. Their father, who had a reputation as a dissident troublemaker in the county, just laughed when the neighbors complained. The pair continued to run through people's yards, mowing down shrubbery and generally creating havoc. Damage to fields of winter wheat was estimated at $45,000. A pair of Christmas-tree farm owners later claimed they sustained similar damage.

The land over which the pair of renegades operated was a mixture of federal, state, and private land, a lot of which was composed of pine-covered hills. Old and overgrown logging roads cut through the country on a regular grid.

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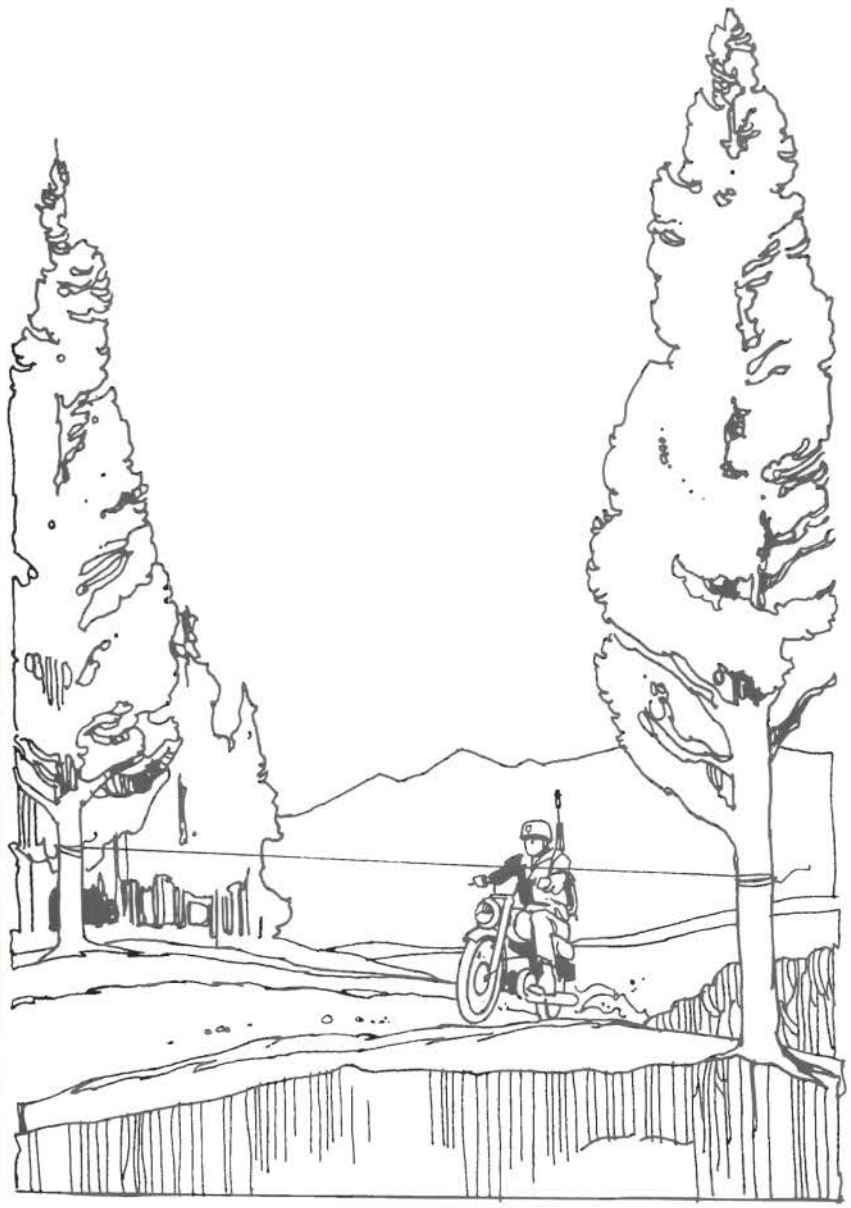
Apparently at least one of the local residents finally got angry enough to do something. The land immediately adjacent to that of the two renegade brothers' place was (and still is) owned by the state. By crossing the land, the two could zoom over the hill and onto thousands of hectares of land. No one was able to catch them on their high-speed machines.

One mid-January morning, a series of "No Trespassing" signs mysteriously appeared around the state land. Though it appeared certain that the state didn't put them up or, for that matter, even authorize them, the signs were nevertheless nailed to trees and posts at thirty-meter intervals. Nothing happened for a couple of days—probably because the two brothers didn't go snowmobiling.

About the third day after the signs appeared, the two hurried home from school, jumped on their snow machines, and zoomed out down the trail across the state land, paying absolutely no attention to the "No Tresspassing" signs. About three hundred meters up the trail, the lead snowmobiler hit a wire that was tautly stretched across the path. He was, according to his own testimony, going at least sixty kilometers at the time. The wire was a single strand of No. 14 black stove wire. It was securely anchored between two trees about five meters apart. Most folks who looked at the trap later felt that if the wire would have been heavier or the distance between the trees greater, it would have killed one or both of the young men.

The first snowmobiler did in fact hit the wire, which was set about one meter above the path, with his windshield. The wire snapped off the windshield, hitting the fellow just above the level of the nose on his helmet shield. The shock jerked him off his machine, severely injuring his neck.

The second guy swerved sideways to avoid the first machine and driver, striking the wire on an angle. It cut through his jacket at the shoulder as well as the side of his helmet, producing a huge tearing gash on the side



Fourteen-gauge wire is stretched very tightly across a trail or road. The height of the wire must be such that the victim will be hit in the neck or chest when he encounters the wire. To make the trap as effective as possible, the anchor posts must be very solid.

of his neck. People who saw him in the hospital later said it was a miracle the wire didn't sever the fellow's neck or an artery. If the wire would have held instead of breaking, it would probably have done the second fellow in.

The wire-across-the-trail gambit is an old, old man-trapping concept. It has more recently been used by the Hungarians against the Russians in Budapest, by the partisans against the Germans on motorcycles in Yugoslavia, and I am told by the Spanish during their civil war.

To work successfully, several elements must fall into place. A wire that is thin enough to be invisible, yet strong enough to cut the victim when he hits it, works well; ropes and vines don't. The wire has to be set in such a way that it and its anchors give as little as possible. A slack wire pulls; a taut wire cuts. One last element that people intuitively know but don't articulate is that the quarry has to be moving into the wire at a pretty good clip. A walking horse isn't fast enough, but one galloping down a trail might be OK.

If parts of the victim's body are exposed—he's traveling in an APC with his head and shoulders exposed, for example—and going fast enough, it doesn't even matter a whole lot where the wire hits him. The impact will probably be fatal.

I have heard about, but not seen, wire traps that are sprung as the victim approaches. In other words, a trigger device pulls the line tight as the motorcycle or whatever approaches. This is done so that the wire cannot be seen until it is too late. In most cases, I do not feel the added work required to install trip set-up devices is worth the problems involved. These wires are not easily seen under even ideal circumstances. If the trapper starts fiddling around with trip set-up mechanisms, he will gain very little and the element of surprise may be lost.

One of the greatest advantages to the wire trap is that it is cheap, easy, and quick to put in. If you know that

some guys are coming toward you riding on top of a truck, it is possible for you to run out and get a wire strung across a road on a minute's notice (including stealing the wire from the phone company).

In the case of troops riding on top of a truck, the effect can be devastating assuming, of course, the road narrows between two buildings or other obstacles where the wire can be strung. The driver will never see it. After being hit a time or two, the guys riding shotgun will get very sloppy about watching what's going on. They will instead tend to hunker down in the truck and ignore the side of the road.

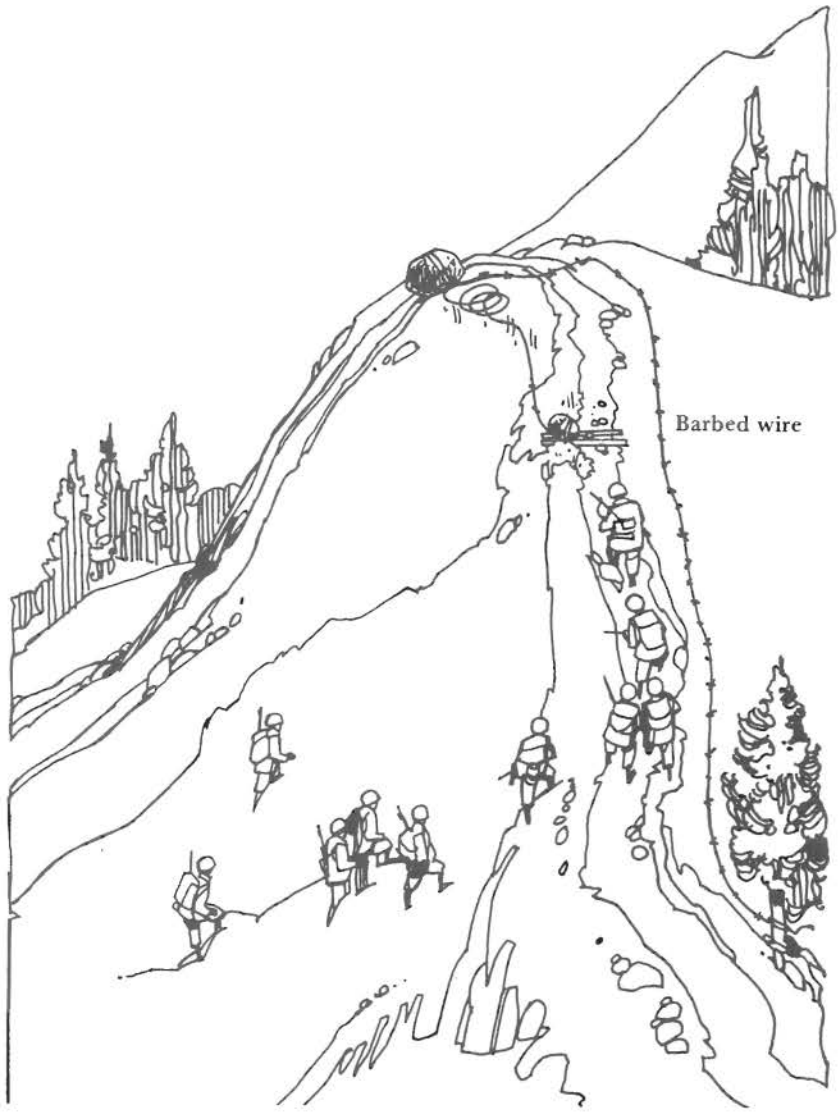
The Moro National Liberation Front and New People's Army (NPA) use the trail wire to nail regular army troops in the Philippines. The crazy thing about these guys operating down on the island of Mindanao is that they keep using the same trap over and over and the Filipino soldiers keep getting hit time after time.

12. SOUTH AFRICAN WIRE WHIP TRAP

This trap is one of the most effective mantraps I know, having the unique ability to chop up an entire company given the correct circumstances. It is easy to set and requires few hard-to-get materials. On the down side, it can't be made from vines and logs, either. The trap requires altitude to work, so is best implemented in the mountains. It requires lots of wire and a heavy round rock, as well as a fairly unique terrain.

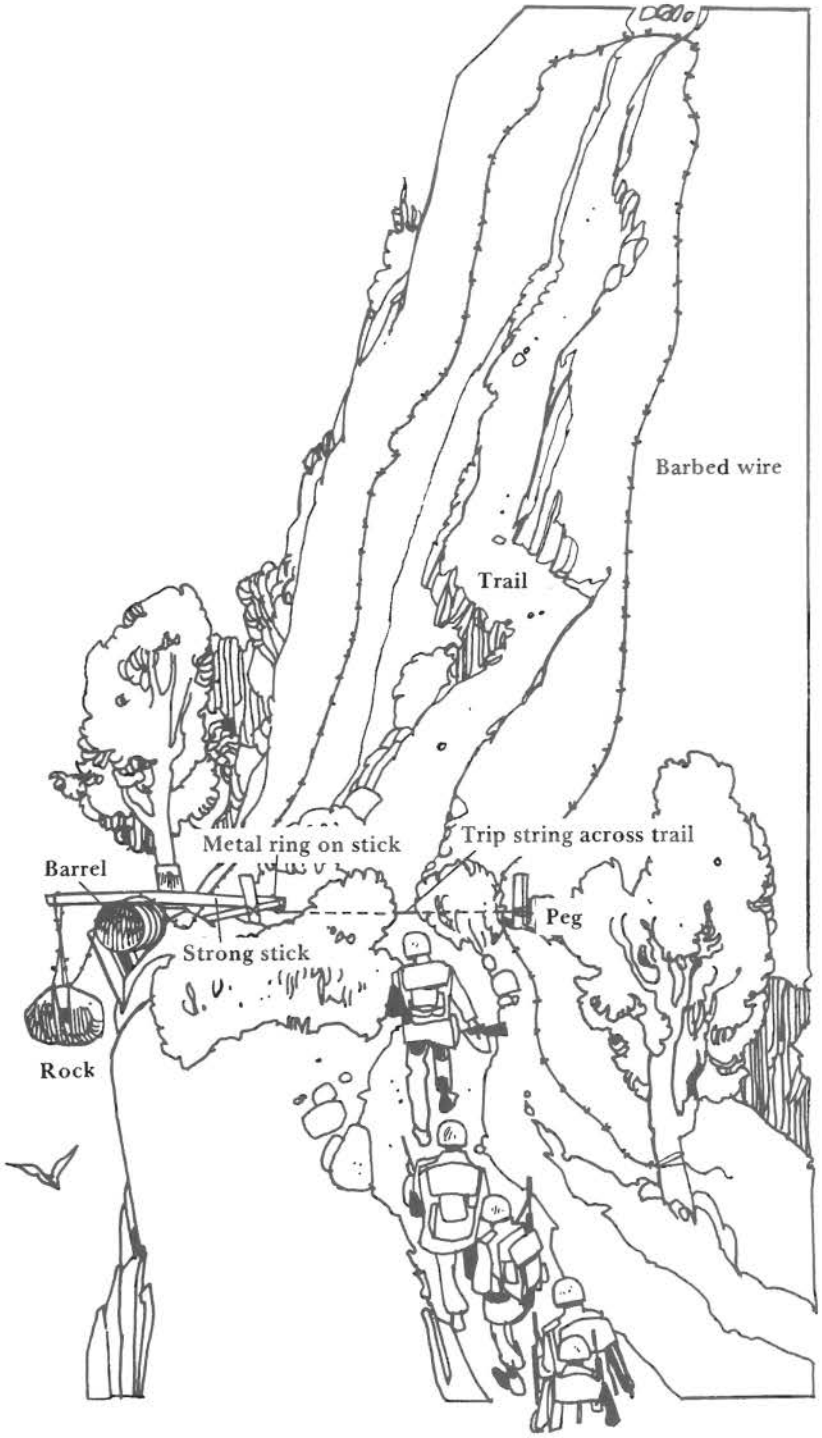
A lengthy column of troops can be taken out if the rock can be set up to roll toward the rear, dragging the wire line down the path up which the troops are moving. To really work well, the trigger should spring the trap from afar, so that the wire has some time to gain momentum before it hits the first man. Traveling at fairly high speed, wire will cut through virtually anything, especially people.

The wire must be placed at about belt level along the trail so that, as it pulls tight, the victim has little chance or ability to dodge out of the way. What we are trying to do is pull the wire, which is in a "U" shape, down the trail at great speed. This trap won't work without a long piece of approximately 16-gauge wire. Heavier wire would be better, but it doesn't cut as well as it should. Sixteen-gauge wire breaks too easily, but it cuts nicely; use it as a compromise. Barbed wire will tear up a column, but it is very difficult to get it to whip down a



In the wire whip trap, the enemy will cause a trip rock, which is balanced on two sticks, to roll down the mountainside. This rock is attached to a larger rock further up the hill, which will also roll down rather quickly, causing wire hidden along the trail to whip across the trail and hillside at great speed.

In this variation of the wire whip trap, the enemy walks into a trip spring in the trail, causing a peg to release and a heavy rock to fall. Barbed wire, which lays over a barrel, will also be forced downhill as the rock falls. This action will cause the rest of the wire to whip across the trail and injure everyone in its path. ⟶



trail because it snags and hangs up so easily. (For that reason, I hate to recommend its use.) Small trees and brush are death on this type of trap, regardless of the wire used. They will stop it completely, especially if the wire is not smooth.

The hillside on which this trap is set has to be clean, but some small brush and grass necessary to hide the wire is OK. To some extent, using a heavier gauge wire and a large rock will help if there is some brush along the trail you decide to use. The wire might, however, pull and not cut, bruising and scraping the victim without mortally wounding him.

A heavy stone can be set to drop straight down, drawing the cable through an entire column! Keep the concept in mind when looking over your terrain and evaluating the supplies on hand. If the trapper has access to long runs of light airplane cable and some pulleys, variations on this trap design are endless and so devastating that it is almost frightening.

Pulleys aren't always necessary. Even barbed wire will run nicely over a thirty-gallon barrel if it is greased a bit. Referring to the illustration of this wire whip trap, note that the real trick is to suitably camouflage the barrels. This is a good hummer to use against a platoon, since the group may be so slashed up and hurt they may go home and stay there!

13. MANTRAPPER'S CHECKLIST

The success that one has using any trap, and especially a mantrap, is directly related to how well the trap blends with its surroundings. The trap should match the topography and vegetation, and the site should be cleaned up after the trap is in place. Judging by the mail I have received, I did not make these points clear enough in my previous mantrapping book.

Once the decision has been made to harass and threaten the enemy by setting out mantraps, the second step–which is more critical and tougher to implement–is to decide what kind of a trap you will set. I have seen traps put out for people on various types of terrain, including the worn, semi-jungly mountains of Cuba; the rocky coasts of the southern Philippines on the island of Mindanao; the hardwood forests in the mountains of northern Thailand; and the Rocky Mountains of the United States. About the only place I haven't seen mantraps used is in blow-sand desert. But even in the desert, I strongly suspect I could come up with something if I had the time and manpower, and was sufficiently motivated.

In determining whether a mantrap should be set, you must consider the manpower and enemy that is available. Nothing is served if a trap is installed but the enemy is not patrolling in that particular area, or if all of your available man and woman power (most

places in the world the women work harder at this sort of thing than the men) is involved in other projects when the enemy is in your area. Keep in mind that some mantraps require a huge number of man-hours to install.

Sometimes there are other reasons for setting mantraps, such as to boost morale or occupy idle hands. Yet, in real life these situations do not seem to occur as often as one would hope. Someone almost always will lament the fact that this enemy or that enemy can walk right in at any time they please without fear or concern. That's the time to speak up and tell your followers that if they are willing to work their asses off, something can be done even without explosives or other "modern" accoutrements of war.

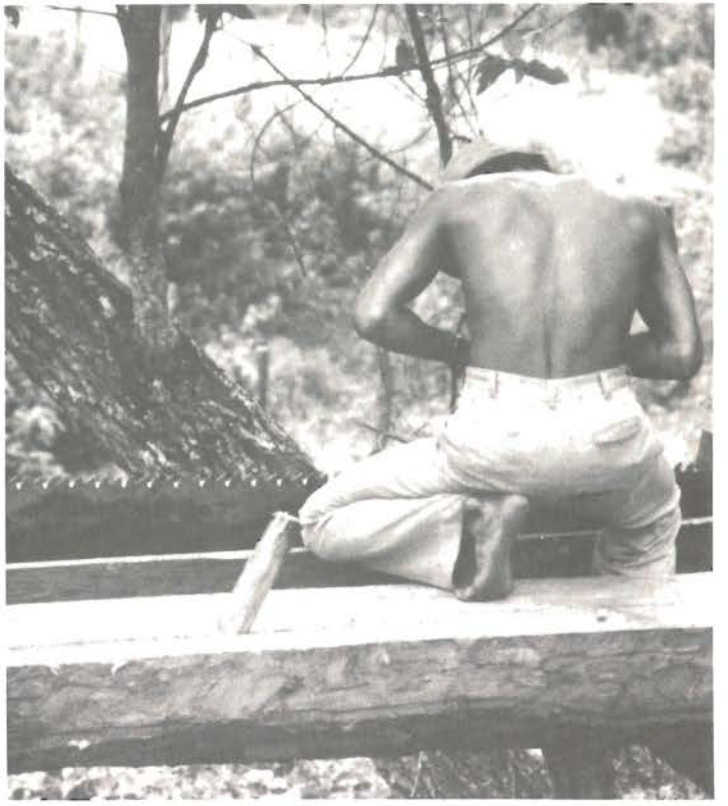
Probably the easiest place in which I ever tried to set a mantrap is in a large city. There are all kinds of situations in cities that people take for granted that are ideal for mantrap setting: rocks, blocks, and bricks are everywhere. So are holes, railings, stairs, moving vehicles, buses, trains, elevators, electric wires, and a host of other similar opportunities.

Outside of the cities, the easiest, most diverse places to set traps are in the mountains of the western United States and other similar places, such as the southern Philippines, the central mountains of Turkey, and northern Thailand. These places have got it all: slippery mud trails, big trees, heavy underbrush, steep hills, rocks, and waterfalls. It isn't hard to find something to use that will work as a mantrap.

The toughest place initially for making mantraps that I worked in was the scrub desert of southern Somalia. There just didn't seem to be much to work with or even much opportunity. The country was so open that people walked wherever they pleased without establishing a pattern. After I was in Somalia awhile, I realized that sometimes foot traffic was naturally funneled into or through specific areas. We figured we couldn't drop anything on anybody because the land was as flat as your hand, and the few trees around were widely scattered. Digging any kind of hole was tenuous since the sand was so loose.

After a bit I realized that at night the Somalis navigate by trees and often passed under certain ones. We tried dropping a log on them from a few of these central navigation trees and also fashioned some tension-mounted, spiked catapults that we thought should work.

The first rule, then, is use the environment—don't fight it. Use what nature provides and adapt it to the surroundings. Work done to bring in big logs or rocks from afar is a waste.



Materials used to make a successful mantrap must be common to the area and blend into the environment.

The second rule is avoid being a purist. Your goal is to harass the enemy, not to prove you can build a trap without nails. If wire, boards, or even a chain saw are available and you can use these items, for God's sake use them! Get the job done. Don't waste energy debating how to do so if the methods are appropriate.

Pick a location that will be, is, and has been used by the intended target. One of my brothers made a beautiful trail set for wolves a few years back. It was an ideal location on a path protected by swamps on either side. Any wolf passing that way would almost certainly run down the trail into the trap. The only problem is that in the last ten or twelve years I don't believe a single wolf has passed through that country at all.

Successful trappers have remarkable powers of observation and recall. Before starting in on a trap, it is imperative that you memorize every detail relative to the surrounding country and landscape. Then when you are finished, you can evaluate the set, piece by piece and point by point, for fit into the surroundings. Here are some of the things I look for:

1. *Tracks.* Be sure the ones that shouldn't be there are brushed out and the ones that should are put back. Cattle or wheel marks are a good example: if they were there when you started, they damn well better be put back before you leave.
2. *Fresh-cut sticks or logs.* Anything that shows recent activity will have to be "antiqued." This includes chips or sawdust made by cutting trees, etc.
3. *Fresh turned earth.* Leaving such soil visible is an obvious no-no, especially since subsoil is often a different color from topsoil. Any farmer passing the trap will know immediately that someone has been digging.
4. *Hanging vines, nails, ropes, or wires.* Be sure to obscure or hide these so the "average man" in your area will not be likely to spot them.

No matter what type of trap you set, you must be sure that any materials you use are either hauled away or hidden from the scene. Here in the Afghan Tank Fall, the bridge, which is rigged so that the vehicle will land in the water once it proceeds across the bridge, should show no evidence of tampering.

5. *Overturned rocks and dislodged moss.* Some North American and Amazon River Valley Basin natives can tell if a person or animal walked up a stream just by looking at the moss. *Be very careful.* Experienced people will catch overturned rocks and dislodged moss as fast as tracks in a dusty road, so take note.
6. *Human excreta and other litter.* People who live in the bush can smell or see these from huge distances.
7. *The wrong thing in the wrong place.* Subsoil on top of the ground, a log from a tree not found in the area, out-of-place vines, the wrong grass growing where it would normally not be found, etc., are all dead giveaways that an area has been tampered with.
8. *Evidence of tampering.* Dead tree branches, dying grass, crushed leaves, and cleaned-away driftwood are all good examples of tampering.
9. *Warning signs read by intruders.* In some places where I have set traps, the locals have put out subtle warning signs, such as a broken branch or small plastic bag stuck on a twig, to keep their own people out of the traps. I don't know for sure, but I think that in some cases the enemy read the warning signs as well as the locals did.
10. *Situations that are too tidy.* I always tell my clients that I can invariably spot the transvestites in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines because they act too femmy. Many dress up so perfectly, they are incredible. They spend hours watching women, copying every action and movement. As a result, they are easy to pick out. Likewise, your trap could also be easy to spot if it looks too good and the location is too clean. Some tips to consider: When setting a mantrap, put the trash back if there was any there to begin with. Don't rake the grass all in one direction. Don't take all the rocks out of the path. Your trap can work only if the set is credible.
11. *Hiding evidence of the trap construction.* Either hide or haul away from the scene any materials you used to make your trap so no one will be able to put two and two together.
12. *Simplicity.* Work at keeping everything as simple as humanly possible.
13. *Drop cloths and tied-back branches.* To help protect the area in which you are working and to keep leaves from shredding, use drop cloths and tie back any branches in your way.
14. *Laziness.* My biggest problem when setting mantraps is basic: Most of the time I know the set looks a little off color but I am reluctant to get the people back in to straighten it up.
15. *Obtaining materials.* Source your materials in such a way that the enemy will not know what you are doing. This is especially important in cities, where it is hard to do anything without being observed. It doesn't take long for the soldiers of an occupying army, even if they have double digit IQs, to figure out why a section of street-car rail was torn up, or why some steel rope or an I-beam disappeared from a building site.

When setting traps for small animals of limited intelligence, the above problems are easy to reckon with. Building an effective mantrap presents hurdles that are very difficult—and occasionally virtually impossible—to overcome.

Even city boys will become incredibly astute at staying out of your traps after a couple of their friends are slashed, stabbed, punctured, or drowned. They will become adept at spotting situations that don't look quite right!

PART II:

ILLUSION AND HARASSMENT DEVICES

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Mantrapping as a form of combat almost always occurs when one of the contestants has little more material at his disposal than supreme, undeterred willpower and a good intellect. I don't believe anyone thinks mantraps are more effective than booby traps. They are not.

The beauty of a good mantrap is its ability to be put in at a time and place where the enemy least expects it. Knowing his adversary does not have claymore or other explosive devices gives the enemy a great deal of confidence. One good catch in a mantrap removes all of that confidence, though. Soldiers slow up their patrols and become infinitely more paranoid.

In a foreign land, this drop in enemy morale is at the same time more than matched by a quantum leap in the friendlies' outlook on life and their perceived ability to withstand the enemy.

There is nothing worse than having to sit idly by while a hated enemy patrols up and down your trails and towns. Mantraps of all kinds give friendly forces with little more than chewing gum and baling wire something to do. It gives them some hope of lashing out at their enemy even though they have very little equipment and virtually no military supplies. Mantraps are a confirmation of the fact that for good minds, there is always hope, and there is always work to do and a way it can be done.

Some mantraps in an urban environment are incredibly easy to set. It is an old and almost archaic adage that the best casualty is one that is not a fatality. Good mantrappers like to see their adversaries whomped flat. I understand that philosophy. In reality, though, it may be better and much easier in an urban environment to break an enemy soldier's leg or separate his shoulder than to kill him. Because the following traps usually don't kill, they are often considered to be more like harassment devices than actual mantraps. Such devices can add to an enemy's discomfort, and anything that makes your enemy's life more difficult is a boon to your side.

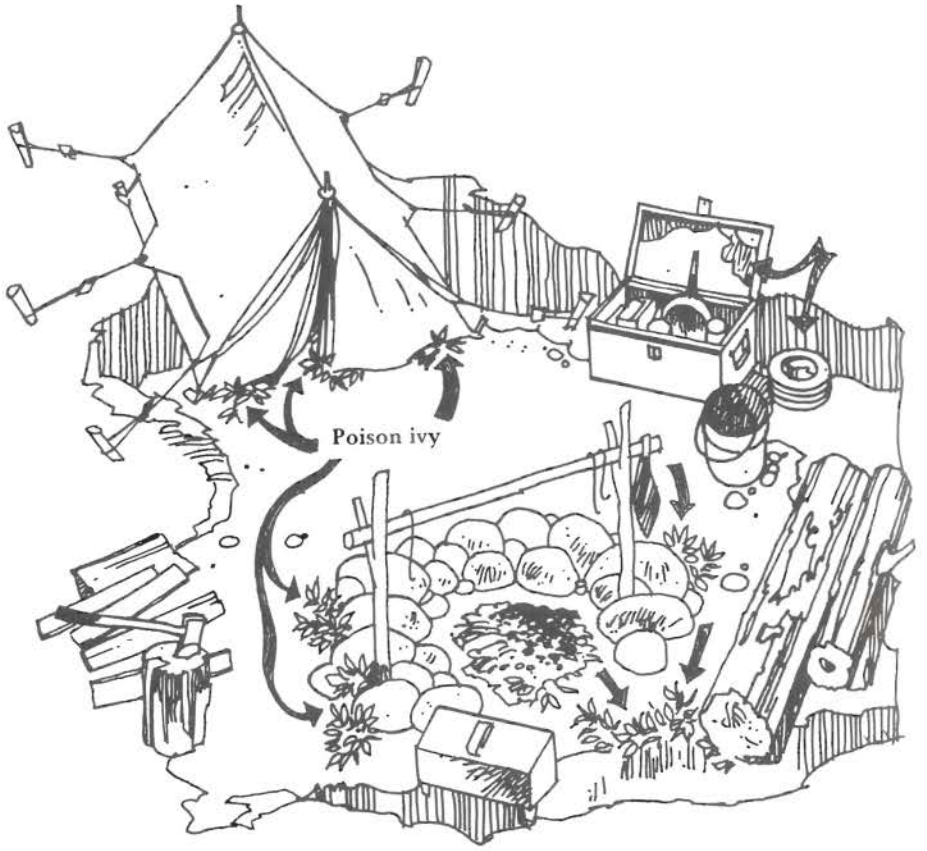
Either way, the outcome is about the same. By using nothing more than common materials, you can improvise to create a harassment device which can put some of the enemy out of the fight and, in so doing, increase the hope and comfort of those on your side.

14. WILDERNESS TRAPS

One of the really effective methods of dealing with an enemy either in or out of a military context is to contribute to his discomfort. It is a variation on the old, old saw that if you kill a soldier, one man with a shovel can take care of the situation in thirty minutes. Wound him, and he will probably never fight again. Wounding him will also tie up three or four of the enemy who must care for the victim.

It was in this context that my Uncle Dugan told me about several traps the Ojibway Indians used to use. They aren't lethal, but they sure can fuel the enemy's discontent.

Uncle Dugan, for those of you who haven't read any of my other books, married my mother's youngest sister. Dugan was an Ojibway Indian, raised on the reservation in Sawyer County in northern Wisconsin. Early on, he taught me a great deal about living out in the woods. Dugan was the one who told me about putting a dry branch in the bottom of your victim's bedroll or sleeping bag so that you can scare him. It helps if you can mention snakes to the victim a time or two beforehand. The chances are good that people who have been thinking about snakes won't see the stick in their bedroll at night when they put their bare legs down in. I have seen one guy who was so shocked that he was temporarily paralyzed from the waist down!



Poison ivy or poison sumac plants can be placed in a victim's tent or around the campfire. These plants can also be rubbed on a log seat or on plates to create additional discomfort for your victim.

If something more than a scare is appropriate, try poison ivy or its less destructive cousins, poison oak or poison sumac. I am not particularly affected by these plants and can handle them with impunity. Some people are so sensitive to the plants that after contact with a three-day-old, wilting branch, they will still get a horrible dose of the crud.

Dugan used to tell me that the Indians would at times rub fresh poison ivy on an enemy's water bottle or canteen spout, or even rub it on an enemy's drinking cup if they could get access to it. The variations on this theme are, obviously, endless. A trick my uncle said the Ojibway occasionally used was to burn poison sumac at a time when the smoke would drift into the enemy's village or, more specifically, into his house. Not all people are affected by this trick. Those that are will go through two or three weeks of hell, modern drugs notwithstanding.

In the old days, Uncle said, the Indians often tried to infect the white men. The Indians weren't particularly affected by poison ivy, but they found that most whites, as well as blacks, were.

One of the truly great harassment traps can be made from a hornet or wasp nest, which is only available a month or six weeks of the year when the wasps are active.

About ten years ago, I put a big yellow-jacket nest under a gallon lard can inside a fellow's tent. The guy had packed up on a ridge and taken over my camp while I was down on the river. When I returned, he was ensconced in my camp. He even had the nerve to burn my wood and feed his horses with the hay I had hauled in.

At dusk, I located a big papery yellow-jacket nest. It was especially hot and dry that fall, so finding what I needed wasn't much of a chore. I snuck into his tent and put the can under his hat when he went out for a bucket of water. The next morning, he overturned the can while picking up his hat, and the yellow jackets

went crazy. I don't think the guy got stung, but he got the message and moved out. Later that afternoon, I repossessed my tent. The wasps were still a nuisance, but I got rid of them when evening rolled around. (Once it got cold, they vacated my tent on their own.)

15. TRAP CHICANERY

There is a popular legend that during the time of the revolution, freedom fighters in Hungary often put dinner plates made of china in the streets to keep Soviet tanks out of the neighborhood. I heard that the same tactic was used in South Korea during the war with China and North Korea, Campuchea when the Khmer Rouge took over, Lebanon, and even the Philippines during the battle with the Japanese.

In every case, except Campuchea, I tend to believe that there is an element of truth to the accounts. Plates can be made to look similar to land mines, causing chary tank commanders to think twice before they storm on ahead down the road. Campucheans don't usually use plates, as we Westerners think of them, so the tale may be apocryphal.

True or untrue, the concept may be important for people who get involved in the business of trapping people. I say maybe, because a lot depends on why one is setting mantraps. My goal had always been to use the traps to make the enemy more cautious and uncertain when moving through my territory. In almost every case, the traps did not seem to keep the bad guys off my turf if they truly wanted to be there. It's just that they came less frequently and, when they did come by, their movement was slowed considerably.

Mantraps raise the ante for intruders and give the

locals some sense of feeling that they can actively do something to protect their homes. Several times I have built mantraps that I knew would have little real use, simply to give the local freedom fighters something to do and perhaps practice their organizational abilities.

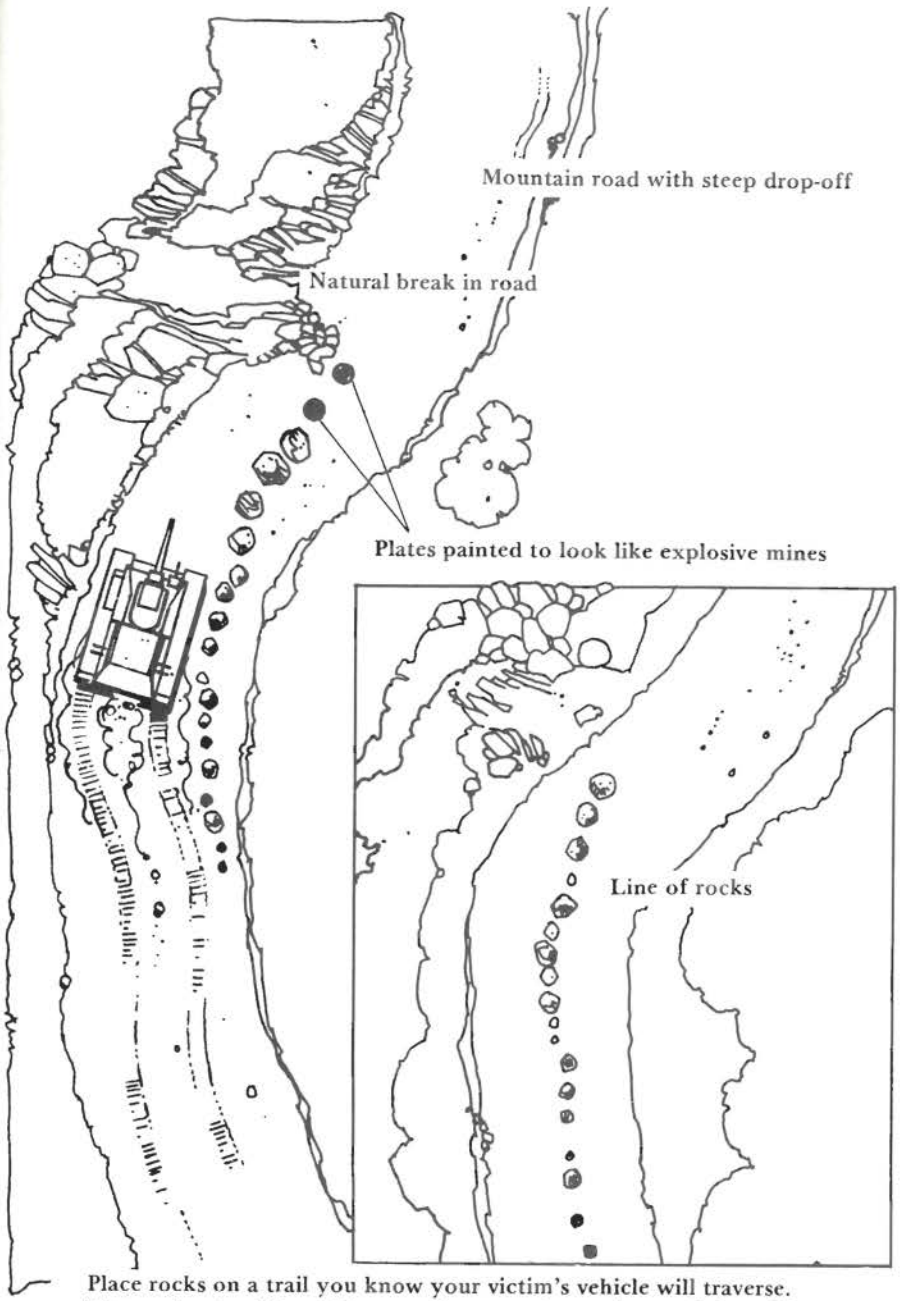
Dummy or fake, mantraps work best when the victims have been stung once or twice. The commando tank driver isn't going to risk the plates because he knows what happens if he guesses wrong. Similarly, the guy who has lost a couple of men to your traps in the hills is going to be a lot more wary than the first timer who has no idea what might happen. Like the situation with the plates in the street, this caution can work in your favor. It is no longer necessary to always build complete traps to accomplish your objectives; something that looks like a trap might do very nicely.

One of my long-term buddies who has been with me on a number of international assignments disagrees. He thinks we should always try to produce a casualty and that anything else isn't really important. I like to keep in mind what it is we are trying to accomplish, but I have to agree that getting a mantrap to work is hugely rewarding.

Never having tried it, I suspect there is more to fooling a tank commander than just laying out a bunch of china. Certainly one would want to look at an antitank mine or two, and try to doll up the plates with paint, grass stains, or even soot and grease. This is certainly true of phony mantraps.

Properly done, a length of steel pipe can be made to look like an antitank gun, or a couple of kilos of putty can become a plastic look-alike. We have made fake LAWs (light antitank weapons) out of sewer pipe, grenades out of molded clay, and submachine guns out of welded scrap. Yet when it comes to mantraps, the situation is far, far simpler.

Consider the band of raiders and bandits who had one of their people break a leg last week in one of your traps. It's going to take them an hour to work past a



Place rocks on a trail you know your victim's vehicle will traverse. The rocks should get bigger as he goes down the road; he will move the vehicle off the road's center to avoid the rocks. When the driver sees the plates you've placed on the road—which he believes to be mines—he may run the tank down a steep drop-off or ravine.

piece of wire stretched on two pegs across a trail. If they run into the wire at night, my experience has been that they will often abandon the entire trail and actually retreat. Just doing a bit of digging along a path or trail works. The fresh dirt seems to be very worrisome to people with trouble on their minds. Leaning a log against a tree or even placing a line of rocks across a road creates real suspicion.

We used this rock ploy in the Philippines a few years back and closed the road from Iligon to Marawi City for almost three hours. There wasn't anything on the road but a line of rocks suspiciously laid out in a row. Of course, it helped that the NPA got a truck a couple of weeks earlier and that the locals knew we were in the neighborhood.

One last trick I saw of this type might be helpful. At the time I saw the following clever trick, I was working on an agricultural project west of Mai Sun, Burma, in the main opium-poppy growing area, where the people often set a kind of crossbow-like mantrap to protect the approaches to their village. We walked steadily for several hours up into the mountains. It was cool when we left the lowland village and, as we walked to the higher elevations, the temperature stayed fairly constant. After a few hours, we ran into some well-armed border guards near one of the many poppy fields in the region. We took off running with these guys in hot pursuit. After a bit, we turned off the main trail onto a side trail down to one of the small local settlements. Soon after, we came upon one-third of a deteriorated pig that was stuck in the crossbow trap, with a huge spear rammed up crosswise through its rear quarters. It probably had been there four or five days.

The Thais I was with thought the pig got caught in a trap which was in actuality set for them. Perhaps it was. But looking back, I really believe the people killed the pig and left it there for us to see. If that was their intent, it worked. We cut the pace to one-third and didn't take another step without careful consideration!

16. BENSON'S LEG BREAKERS

Not every trap employed against an enemy has to be designed to kill him. Some really effective mantraps, which are easy to design and set, are available that are principally put in to bust the bad guys' balls. Maybe you will get lucky and do more damage than that, but under normal circumstances the traps described in this chapter aren't lethal.

When we were kids, the creek in the back pasture changed channels one fall and ate its way under a giant old cottonwood. When the spring floods came along with the fierce March winds, the old tree completely lost its underpinning and fell across the creek. The event had far more impact on the lives of us kids than anyone could ever have predicted.

The tree was, for instance, so big that it damned up the creek and raised the level of the water over our swing hole about twenty cm (8 inches). The current cut a channel more than two meters deep under the log and the resultant pool became the best small mouth bass hole in the entire creek. It was also a damn good place to catch muskrats.

We learned to set one trap on the log and one under it. The trap on top, set in the spillway where the water came over, was good for a muskrat a week and a mink per season. The trap set in the notch up out of the water probably earned us twenty-five or thirty dol-

lars for the coons, possums, and foxes it nabbed. We even put a snare underneath the log and did pretty well hooking the occasional mink or muskrat that swam there.

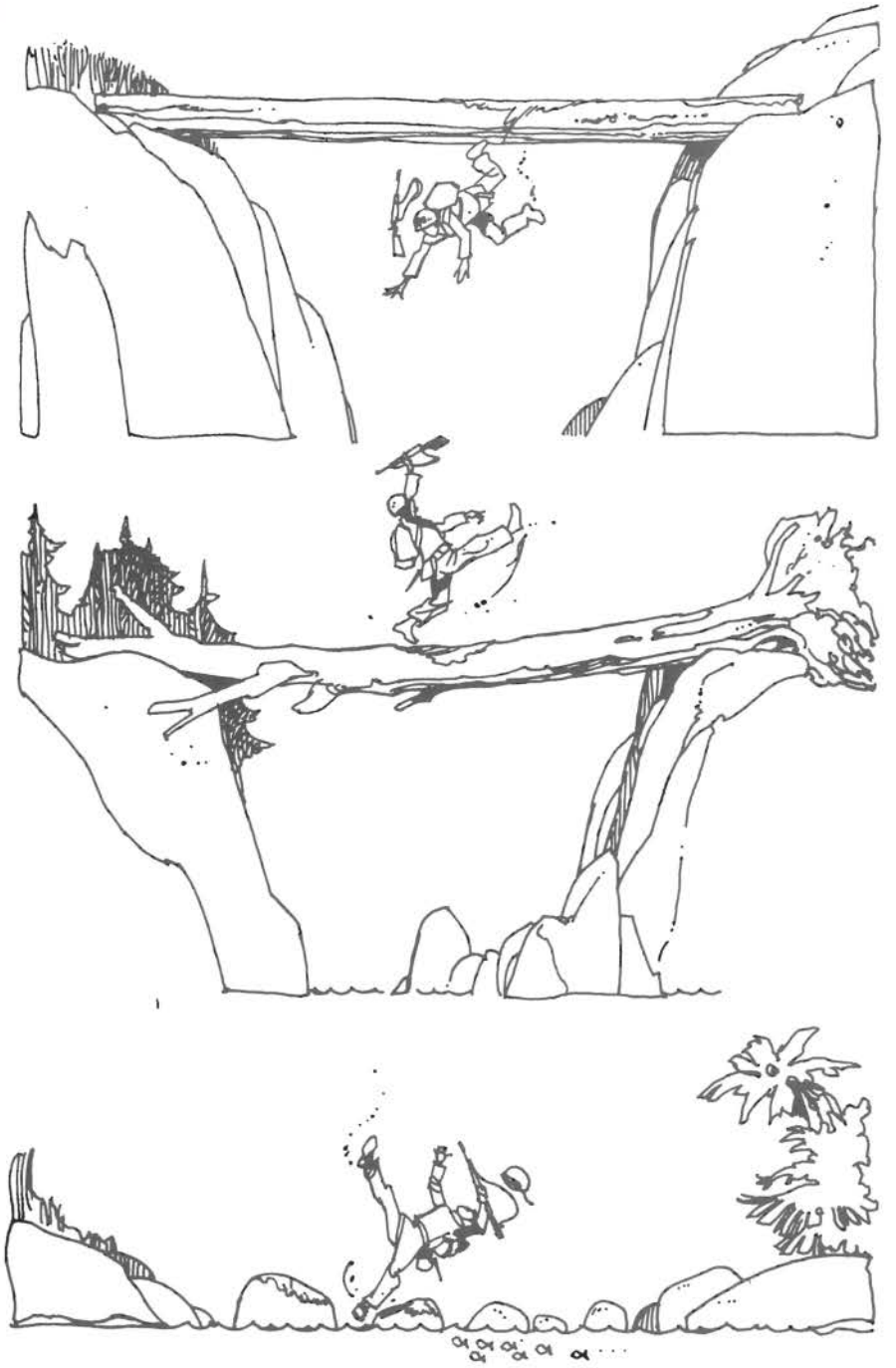
The under-the-log business wasn't all that good, however. It was difficult to get the snare in and positioned properly, especially when the creek started to freeze over. We would usually mess around with the thing for a bit and give up.

The really significant turn occurred when the hillbillies living north of us discovered that the log bridge made a nice access into our trapping and hunting ground, and eventually I wound up with a .22 round in the arm as a result. We discovered we had company in our game areas when my brothers and I started picking up strange traps from time to time. Usually they were so well hidden that the only way we found them was if we happened by right when they held a critter. Piles of rabbit guts and fur further alerted us.

One of my brothers hit on the bright idea of peeling the bark off the top of the log and coating the bare hard wood with axle grease. It was a good idea because the log bowed down to the middle and then up again to the other side. Anybody who headed across would almost certainly slip to the center and then off the other side into the deepest part of the hole.

I guess the axle grease worked pretty well. We never saw anybody fall off the log, but twice that winter the ice was broken as if there had been some kind of a commotion. Then someone put sand and dirt on the grease. We cleaned off the log and put on more grease. That was the end of our problems with the hillbillies. They knew that we knew they were coming across the log. After the shooting incident, they just didn't want to be that obvious.

Later, we used the same basic trick on Old Man Mauer in town. My brother took a mink skin in for the old skinflint to appraise. He looked at it and then carelessly threw it on a hot stove and singed it badly. Hav-



A generously greased log or rock can cause your victim to either fall into a ravine or into a cold creek.

ing done all that, he said the skin was only worth three dollars because it was damaged. We tried to sell the skin to another dealer and when that wasn't possible, decided it was time for something else.

Old Man Mauer lived at the edge of town on a small grassy knoll. A longish U-shaped paved lane accessed the front door, behind which he had a small garage. Because the driveway to the street was so steep, the old skinflint paved two strips the width of his car tires so he could shovel out easier in the winter. A fence surrounded his property and crossed his drive at the bottom of the lane. Whenever the old geezer pulled his car out of the garage, he would stop it on the hill, close the garage door, and open the gate at the bottom. He had the only aluminum gate I had seen up to that time, which he apparently paid $17.50 for at the co-op, a princely sum in those days.

My brothers and I scrounged up a lard can full of old bacon grease, and took it over to Mauer's place that night. We slathered it on his driveway all the way down to the gate. The lard was kind of grayish brown and apparently didn't show up very well—more luck than design. There wasn't anything else available that we could afford to use to play our trick on Mauer.

The old skin burner pulled out the next morning and slid right down the hill into the gate. His car didn't go through, but it did bend the gate so that it couldn't be repaired. One of the neighbors said he almost hit the milk truck too, but that may not be entirely true.

We have since used variations of this device a number of times. I greased a log that crossed a gulley near our camp at Gatab in the New Frontier District of Kenya. (There is no way to know for sure, but I believe we helped keep the raiders out of the southern end of the valley with this ploy.) In Thailand, by greasing the rock from which he tossed his net, I caught a guy who was swiping shrimps out of one of our ponds. And in the Philippines, we closed the driveway up to a small hotel

we were using by dumping ten or twelve barrels of Bunker C oil on the pavement. Anybody who wanted to drive up—a taxi loaded with dynamite, for instance—had to turn a T-corner and then had only about twenty meters of street before the drive went sharply uphill. (It was only a makeshift arrangement until we made up some barrels of concrete, but I never saw anyone, friend or foe, drive up the hill until we treated it with pea gravel.)

There have been a number of times when I have thought of using the slippery rock or log trick. As I said at the start, it won't do much more than bruise a guy's behind. Sometimes that won't be enough. Regardless, it takes little skill, imagination, material, time, or even courage to get traps like these in place.

17. FLAMING OIL TRAP

There is nothing like being the victim of someone's trap to test its effectiveness.

It was early autumn of 1970. I was camped on Big Creek about ninety kilometers east of McCall, Idaho, in what is now the Payette National Forest primitive area. A fellow by the name of John Sullivan was my partner, who at the time was in his early thirties. From the time he graduated from high school, he had worked as a hard-rock miner in the Coeur d'Alene district. Three years earlier, an ore car crushed his pelvis, putting him in the hospital for a year. At the time they finally released poor John from the hospital, the mining company officials told him that since he wouldn't be able to work for at least another year, they would pay his tuition if he wanted to use the time attending university classes.

As it worked out, John found out that he had an IQ of 140. He easily did his freshman year in one semester plus summer school. I guess the reason I liked John so well was because he was both smart and had street (or field, if you prefer) sense. We met the previous winter when we both took some of the same geology courses. By spring our friendship had "set." As a result, I bought right in when John put together a project to make a few dollars placer-mining gold in the central Idaho mountains. A few weeks earlier, he and two classmates went out and placered the piece of ground a gold dredge sat

on when it finished running a creek. For the price of two beers, they got almost two ounces of gold.

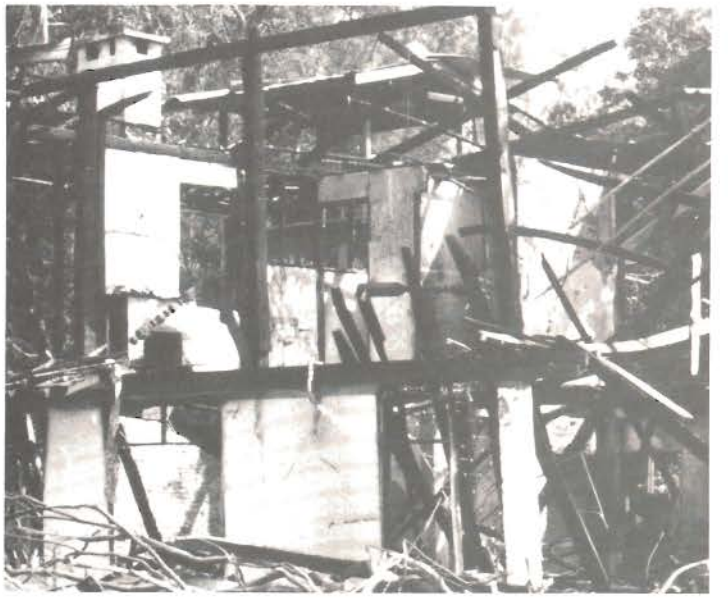
At the time, the U.S. Forest Service was busy buying up the last remaining private land holdings in the region in anticipation of the area reverting to a designated wilderness. For us, our search for gold was a kind of do-or-die effort! We knew that if we didn't get it this year, the roads would soon be closed and the area closely watched, effectively closing out the option to do any gold panning at all. We drove for a day and then walked most of the second, making camp late in the evening. Camp was not actually on Big Creek, but a small, unused side drainage.

John liked that country quite a bit. Some ten years previous he had camped in the region for about thirty days waiting for a strike at his mine to blow over. During that time, he had gotten to know a retired British navy officer, and they saw each other once or twice a year thereafter till shortly before the old geezer died. The guy grew to trust John, finally asking him to have four mason jars of gold dust smelted which he had accumulated. John had the work done and sent the considerable proceeds to a very surprised daughter living in the United Kingdom.

The creek we were on was near the old guy's cabin and the one John always felt was probably the source of the four quarts of gold dust. We worked the area for two days, trying to decide if it was promising enough to set up a rocker sluice. A Forest Service horse trail cut in above us about a mile, winding up to Dixie where another long, tortuous road accessed the area. We figured we basically had the place to ourselves and that no one knew we were about.

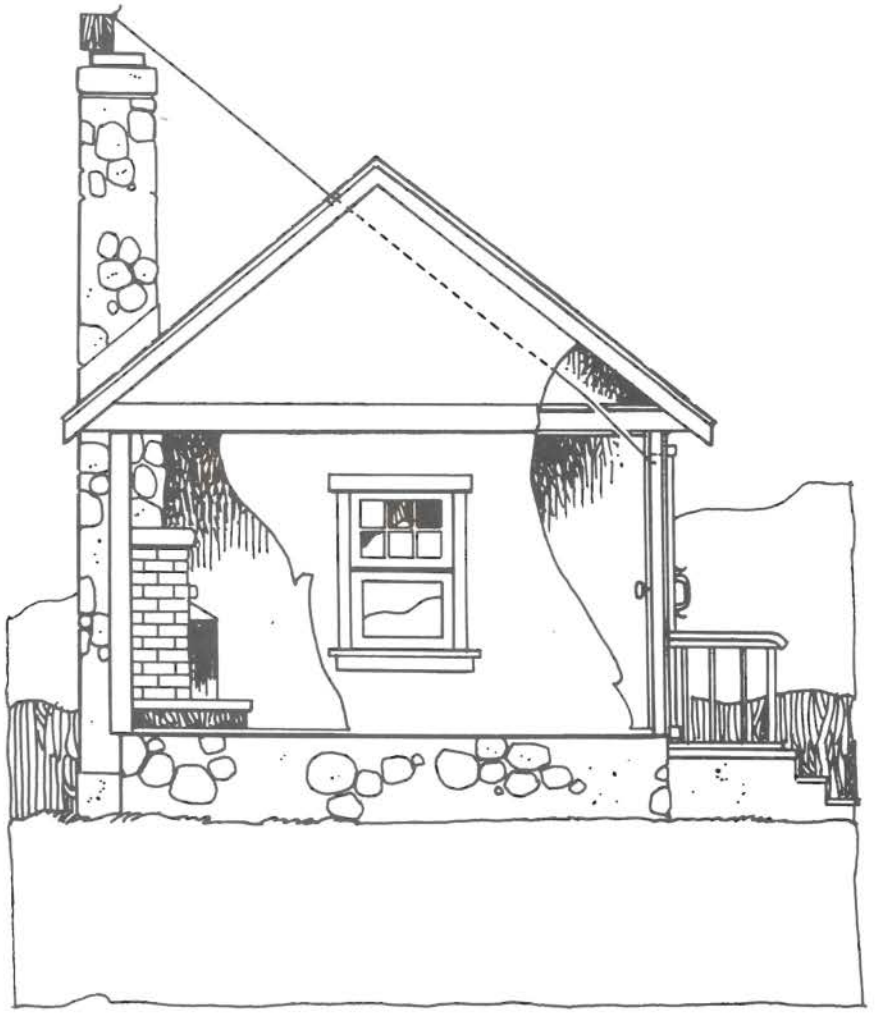
What we failed to realize was the intensity of the distrust in which visitors were held.

The U.S. Forest Service was using forced condemnation to buy up the few remaining private holdings in the area. As soon as the government people got their piece of paper saying the land was legally theirs, they



This house in northern Thailand was heavily damaged by a car bomb made up mostly of natural gas. It was set by members of an opposing heroin-trafficking organization.

This structure is ideal for a trap in which a can of gasoline is poured down a chimney.



A can of gasoline can be placed on the chimney edge, with a line from the can to the door. Once the door is opened, the can falls and the gas ignites once a match is lit.

sent in teams of temporary employees to erase all signs of previous human habitation. Most of these groups were counterculture types, recruited from eastern universities.

One of the first things these people did was to burn down any cabins, barns, line shacks, or homesteads still standing on the property. Many of these structures had been built eighty or one hundred years earlier and had historic significance. Many were large and elaborate. Nevertheless, they were all put to the torch.

People still living in the area were naturally mad about it. And I guess we got taken for Forest Service temporaries.

Our camp was right on the small creek we were trying to placer. That night someone snuck in a few hundred meters upstream and dumped what we estimated to be from five to ten gallons of gasoline and stove oil into the water. We figured they dumped gas and oil due to the resulting smell.

The water carried the fuel down to our camp, where it was ignited either by the perpetrator or our campfire. In retrospect, I guess there wasn't that much damage, but we sure hopped around for a bit pulling our packs, bedrolls, and food to safety.

Strictly speaking, this particular flaming oil or gas trick does not really constitute a trap. Traps go off when the victims stumble into them. There is no direct, immediate human involvement. Firing somebody's camp or village requires outside help.

Nevertheless, the idea has merit. I once put two drums of gas in a Landcruiser and ran them out through a village in Campuchea. We torched the trail with a flare, and the results were spectacular. The confusion the burning street created played right into our hands. Another time, I tried to flush out a heroin lab in Burma by dumping gasoline in the creek. There wasn't enough fuel, however, and the results were disappointing.

Keep the flaming oil/gas idea in mind. It might even be possible to actually rig the gas into a trap if the situa-

tion is just right by placing a container of gas where it will be tipped down a chimney into a cabin, later to be ignited by a person lighting a cigarette. Or you can try lacquer thinner or ether if it is available. Now there is some material with real zoom in it!

PART III:

ADDITIONAL MANTRAP SCENARIOS

18. URBAN MANTRAPS

I have included urban mantraps here in response to the mail I have received regarding my first book and as a result of the practical realities one is likely to face in the world today. Though most of the world population lives in rural areas, a lot of readers are asking about traps they can use in cities. That's where they think they will operate and where they feel the most comfortable.

My experiences with urban mantraps lead me to believe that they can be effective but usually not in a lethal sense. The trappee tends to get hurt, not killed; annoyed, not severely deterred.

This is, of course, not always the case. Quite a number of years ago, I worked in Turkey with a fellow named Bill Steadman, who claimed to be a hell of an urban trapper. I don't know if it is true or not, but Bill claimed he waited two weeks one time for a neighborhood deli owner to walk down a set of stairs from an overpass onto an elevated subway platform in Chicago. At just the right moment, Bill threw several packages of dried peas onto the subway stairs. The deli owner then slipped down the last few steps and fell over onto the train tracks, where he was crushed by an oncoming train.

Crazy Bill Steadman eventually disappeared into the counterculture underground in Copenhagen in the early

1970s, so I guess I can tell this story about him now. Deciding whether this story is true or not is up to the reader. I do know that old Bill was quite competent when it came to this sort of thing.

Breaking legs and busting heads in the city is easier than it is in the country because city people are very much creatures of habit, tending to trust mechanical situations implicitly. Humans travel the same route day after day, stand in the same place time after time while waiting for trains, and sit or stand in the same place in the same train car. If it were not for this obsessive sameness, individuals would be impossible to trap in the city.

Some animals are absolutely impossible to trap without capitalizing on the routine they follow. Coyotes, for instance, have good intelligence, a keen sense of smell, and excellent vision. If it weren't for the fact that they take the same route over and over again and like mice and wild game birds for dinner, no one would ever catch a coyote in a trap.

Humans are much the same. If it weren't for the fact that people use the same stairs, travel the same route to work every day, and go to lunch at the same time, specific humans would be impossible to trap. We would continually catch the wrong person.

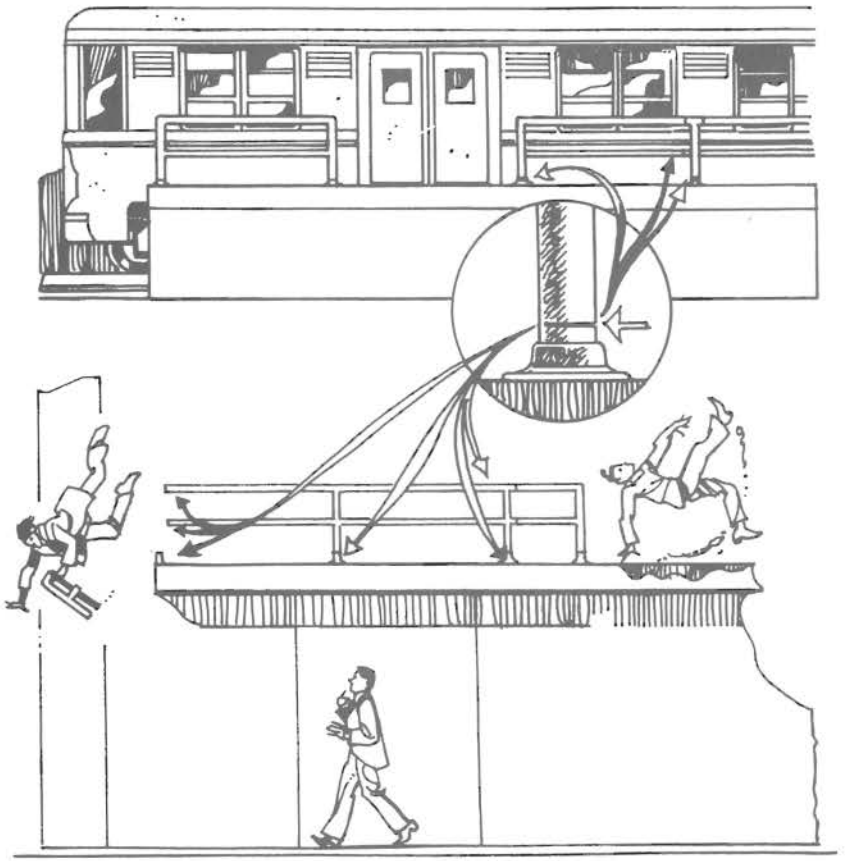
Try, for instance, taking the top board off the back steps of someone's porch. If that person goes out the back door to work every morning, he will fall into the hole just as sure as God made green apples. That guy knows the step is going to be there, and he is going to use it. An absolute dunce can set a successful mantrap under these circumstances!

You can easily prove this axiom. The next morning after having skinned his leg or being pitched off the porch, our victim will, of course, watch for the step—and walk right through a door rigged so that a bucket of broken glass dumps on him.

Another trick you can play on a victim who customarily sits on a bench while waiting for a bus or subway

Being creatures of habit, humans tend to stand in the same spot on a train platform, day after day, thereby making placement of a trap rather easy.

Not only do people stand in the same place on a train platform every day, they also lean against the same railing and rely on the same walkways, guardrails and stairs. Placement of a mantrap is thus easy to determine.



Railings on a train platform can be weakened by almost cutting through the supports with a hacksaw. Your victim can then either fall onto the tracks (top) or fall onto a lower level. Another trick you can use is to place oil on the floor of an area you know your victim will walk over, thereby causing him to slip and to fall onto a track, lower level, or down a staircase.

is to rig the bench so it rocks over backwards, dumping the person into the traffic or onto the train tracks.

Cities are dangerous places. People live and work in close proximity to a lot of potentially harmful things. Yet they place an incredible amount of trust in the stairs, railings, gratings, barriers, walks, and ladders they use every day. Trucks and cars whiz by within one meter of a person—at killing speeds—and yet no one says a word.

The first kid in my grade school class to get hit by a car was walking along a parkway on a sidewalk that was being repaired. A brick balanced one slab which tilted sideways, throwing my buddy into the street where a car hit him. Another guy busted his head open when he walked over a sidewalk elevator-shaft cover that had been intentionally weakened. The doors fell open, and down he went. One time we rigged a hair trigger on a guy's garage door hold-up mechanism. It fell on him when he put it up and started to walk away, and the mechanism didn't hold like it always had before.

Somebody—probably members of the New People's Army—sawed almost through the supports on the mobile stair ramp at the airstrip in Davao City in the Philippines. When the acting governor came to the door of the plane to wave and walk down the stairs, the portable ramp only bent a little. Nobody paid any attention. The thing collapsed, however, and the generals following the governor swarmed down the stairs. I thought the scene was pretty funny, but my mirth was not shared. The dignity of the generals was damaged worse than if the NPA had actually shot them.

The idea, when setting an urban mantrap, is to look for a situation where the habits of the intended victim take him into a situation that adds danger as a result of height or mechanical contrivance. Weakening a railing so the victim will fall off a platform into the path of an oncoming train is the model for the type of situation that will often work in cities. It isn't hard to come up with a lot of good ideas, though, that will combine

Loosening a board or brick on your victim's porch or steps can cause him to lose his balance and perhaps break an arm or leg.

these two factors.

Whenever there is a ladder that an enemy uses, or pier he will walk out onto, or solitary stairs he is likely to climb, there is potential for mischief. It is then up to the alert mantrapper to go to work with hacksaw and knife, changing the environment so that that which was always taken for granted no longer functions as the victim assumes it will. The situation can be made lethal by adding spikes or spears for the victim to fall on.

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

Man, by virtue of his habits, can be incredibly easy prey. In response to requests for more on trapping the most deadly and dangerous game of all, Ragnar Benson, who brought you the infamous Mantrapping, *tells how to rig more traps without explosives or other accoutrements of war.*

The do's and don'ts for a successful mantrap are detailed in a checklist, and urban traps designed to make your victim's life miserable are included. Such ingenious devices as helicopter and heavy military-equipment traps, urban and wilderness traps, trap chicanery, Benson's "leg breakers" and more are detailed.

A PALADIN PRESS BOOK
ISBN 0-87364-356-9